Solons oppose appointment of new DPWH chief

Story on PAGE A2

Iraqis honor donkey on Saddam birthday

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME

BAGHDAD—Joyous crowds in Baghdad celebrated Saddam Hussein's birthday in a brand new way on Monday, pasting photos of the former strongman on a donkey as they heaped scorn on his brutal

IRAQIS/ A6

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MSU prof released; 'board, lodging' paid

By Christine Godinez-Ortega and Jeffrey P. Maningo
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ILIGAN CITY—A leap of faith, a shout for joy.

The family of Rhede Nelson Manulat, bound closer since his abduction two months ago, found its prayers answered when the university professor was re-

MSU/ A6

GMA: Be prepared for worst scenario

But SARS not yet nat'l emergency

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday clarified that the SARS crisis has not yet deteriorated into a national emergency. At the same time, however, she launched new initiatives to head off what she called the "worst scenario."

In an unusual step, the President also summoned media owners and managers to Malacañang, to ask them to donate TV and radio airtime and newspaper space for daily updates on the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak from the Department of Health.

"We're not yet in a national emergency; it's just a wake-up call," Ms Macapagal told an assembly of newly trained *barangay tanod* (village watchmen) in Pasay City. She repeated the same message in the afternoon meeting with media owners.

But the President did urge the people to brace for "mandatory quarantines" if deemed necessary by the DOH, declaring that "there is no room for half measures" to contain SARS.

"We must anticipate the worst scenario now so that we will not wake up to a crisis that is much bigger than we imagined," Ms Macapagal said.

In her speech at the Cuneta Astrodome, the President announced the following measures:

- "Mandatory quarantines will have to be enforced as (Health Secretary) Manuel Dayrit finds necessary."
- Barangays and communities must "actively participate not only in quarantine measures but also in contact tracing," to determine the identities of people who had come in contact with probable SARS carriers.
- A proposed SARS Act in Congress has been certified as an urgent Malacañang bill to "show our people that we mean business" and to "institutionalize further" the measures contained in the executive order she signed last week.
- A "clean-up week and SARS consciousness week" has been scheduled starting May 5.

"Containment measures may seem to be too harsh but we seek public understanding," Ms Macapagal said.

The President indicated that her spokesperson, Secretary Ignacio Bunye, may have overreacted when he used the phrase "national emergency" to describe the health situation.

Bunye used the term thrice in two radio interviews and in an official Malacañang statement on Sunday.

Bunye issued another statement yesterday, admitting he had been less than precise but also contending that SARS was a potent threat

GMA/ A17

IT'S three, not four, says President Macapagal, of the SARS cases in the Philippines.
ERIK ARAZAS

No SARS but stigma remains for Samar folk

By Cyrain Cabuenas
PDI Visayas Bureau
and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

A BARANGAY in Maydolong, Eastern Samar, has been declared SARS-free but residents still suffer the stigma of being village mates of JP, who was earlier tagged as the country's fourth SARS case.

"You are entering Barangay SARS. Wear your masks now," people from Barangay Maybocog in Maydolong, Eastern Samar would say in jest.

But it was in reality an attempt to make light of the way outsiders have been treating them after it was learned that JP was from their community.

Health officials yesterday declared JP free of the SARS virus after it was determined that she had suffered a viral infection different from SARS.

In Alcala, Pangasinan, the isolation period imposed on three zones of Barangay Vacante has been officially lifted, but people still identify the place as the village of Adela and Mauricio Catalon, the first two people to die of SARS in the country.

Except for four households, residents of Barangay Vacante (pop: 696)—whose lives were briefly distracted by forced isolation—have been allowed to freely leave and enter their village. The isolation period was officially lifted on Sunday.

Dr. Nemesia Mejia, Pangasinan health officer, said only 26 people with whom Mauricio, Adela's father, had close contact before his death need to be quarantined in their homes until April 30.

Epidemiologist Revelyn Cayabyab of the regional office of the Department of Health said no one from the village, in-

NO SARS/ A15

Dayrit: We're down to three SARS cases

By Armand N. Nocum

IT'S back to three.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit yesterday took the name of a 47-year-old overseas Filipino worker off his department's list of SARS cases, after she tested negative for the virus.

Another DOH official announced that the Regional Institute for Tropical Medicine and the San Lazaro Hospital were now capable of doing tests for the coronavirus, the carrier agent of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

"We are down to three SARS cases," Dayrit told the INQUIRER yesterday.

In his press briefing at the DOH, Dayrit said the overseas worker in Samar, with the initials JP, was not running a fever and that she and four of her contacts would be released from quarantine.

"Although we said that JP was a SARS case on Friday, the review of her X-ray showed that it was not pneumonia. She is also responding very well to antibiotics," he said.

"Apparently, she has recovered from whatever viral infection she had. She is in stable condition, is ambulatory but with a recurring cough," he said. JP will be discharged today.

In a speech before newly trained *barangay tanod* (village watchmen) in Pasay City, President Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized the de-listing.

"We only have three SARS cases, the foreigner and the father and daughter," the President said.

"JP has not been infected with SARS," she added. The President was referring to the German national who has since recovered, and overseas worker Adela Catalon and her father Mauricio, who died of SARS eight days apart.

A private hospital had earlier diagnosed JP, who had flown in from Hong Kong, as suffering from pneumonia. But more recent results showed she had a "normal chest finding."

A report the hospital sent to the DOH showed that there was "No demonstra-

DAYRIT/ A16

AMID the ravages wrought by SARS, life goes on for these Filipino workers in Hong Kong as they dance the boogie along the promenade at the Tsim Sha Tsui district in Kowloon.
DANTE PERALTA/PINOY ABROAD

What kind of mask one should wear

By Anna York P. Bondoc, MD

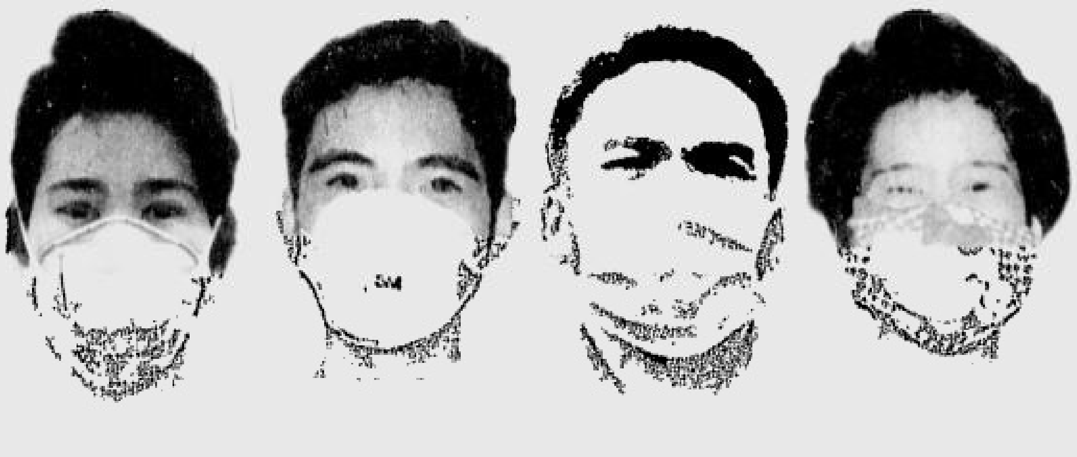
MASKS are everywhere! They are the most coveted and most overpriced commodity on the market. Sadly, masks are also the hallmark of a previously open and friendly society now seeking to protect itself from an unknown enemy.

Due to the proliferation of these various personal barrier devices, we answer the most common questions:

How do we get SARS?

WHAT/ A6

Cover-up



R95 mask: Best for health care workers.

Respirator mask: One-way valve.

Surgical mask: In wide use.

Fashion mask: Cute but next to useless.

Vietnam offers hope SARS can be licked

HANOI—The World Health Organization on Monday declared Vietnam the first country to contain SARS, but the crisis worsened alarmingly in China which reported eight new fatalities and hundreds of new infections despite the forced quarantine of thousands.

Hong Kong also reported five more deaths from SARS, raising the worldwide toll to at least 332. It has sickened around 5,000, mostly in Asia.

Even so, the WHO said the worst of SARS outbreak appeared to be over not only in Vietnam but also in Singapore, Canada and even Hong Kong. "It appears from reports that the epidemic has peaked in those countries," said David Heymann, WHO chief of communicable diseases.

According to Heymann, a "peak" is the point when an epidemic hits "a maximum number of cases per day." He noted that Singapore, Canada and Hong Kong were having "fewer cases

VIETNAM/ A16

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/04/29/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Solons oppose DPWH appointment

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

HAVING apparently succeeded in getting outgoing Public Works Secretary Bayani Fernando to give up his dual government positions, some House legislators have trained their guns on his replacement at the public works department.

FERNANDO

SORIQUEZ

Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay said Undersecretary Florante Soriquez, who was appointed as Fernando's replacement in an acting capacity, was not the right choice because he is allegedly facing charges in the so-called "lahar scam."

Paras said that now that Fernando has agreed to give up the public works portfolio so he could continue as chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority, the Department of Public Works and Highways should start on a clean slate.

"(Soriquez) is involved in the mega-dike scam so the President should look for a better replacement," Paras said.

The congressman said he learned that the position was originally offered to Undersecretary Ted Encarnacion who declined. He said Encarnacion recommended Undersecretary Manuel Bonoan, who appears to be acceptable to Pichay and Paras.

Pichay said he could not understand why Soriquez was chosen when he was not the most senior of the department's undersecretaries and had been in the post only three months.

"He does not command the respect of the men and women of the DPWH so in all honesty he cannot be effective in this position," Pichay said.

DPWH employees in Central Luzon, however, described Soriquez as a "hardworking boss" who skips meals to devote more time to the job.

They said Soriquez, 61, often works through his lunch break, subsisting on crackers and sardines. He also often works up to midnight, they said.

But Soriquez's name had been dragged into the controversy over the allegedly faulty design of the 56-kilometer FVR Megadike, which protects the towns of Pampanga against lahar.

Soriquez was the chief of the Mt. Pinatubo Rehabilitation Project Management Office and the Mt. Pinatubo Emergency Project Management Office, which Congress created after the eruption of the volcano, and supervised all foreign-funded anti-lahar projects.

While the megadike successfully held against lahar flows, its transverse dike collapsed a month after its inauguration in August 1997.

Early in 2000, the Office of the Ombudsman cleared Soriquez of graft charges over the allegedly faulty design of the transverse dike. Only the chief and personnel of the DPWH's design bureau were charged.

Marine geologist Kelvin Rodolfo had expressed dismay over the development and appealed to officials of the Estrada administration to get the "big fish," referring to Soriquez and others in the Ramos administration.

The DPWH continues to spend money on upgrading the anti-lahar structure. The government has already spent almost P3 billion on the megadike, complementing it in 2000 with a new P3.5-billion loan from the Japanese government.

Meanwhile, the rigodon at the DPWH continues, with Fernando swearing into office two new assistant secretaries yesterday, even as Soriquez was taking his oath as incoming chief in Malacañang.

Rafael Yabut and Mocamad Raki-in were promoted from regional directors of the National Capital and Caraga regions, respectively.

Yabut, 50, rose through the ranks. He started as a laborer rising to assistant to civil engineer through the years. He became district engineer of the Pampanga first engineering office in 1995.

Raki-in was a construction foreman who became district engineer of Misamis Occidental in 1982. *With a report from Blanche S. Rivera*

Formal probe into killing of Mindoro activists starts

PURSUING "strong indications" that soldiers were behind the recent deaths of two human rights activists in Oriental Mindoro, Task Force Mindoro, the justice department's fact-finding team, placed several members of the Philippine Army's 204th Infantry Brigade under formal investigation over the weekend.

This was revealed by Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida, head of the task force formed Wednesday on orders of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Who have the motives to silence Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy? If we go by the facts . . . they (are the logical suspects)," Calida told the INQUIRER yesterday in a phone interview. He was in Baguio City for a national convention of prosecutors.

Produce names

Calida ordered Col. Juanito Gomez, who replaced Col. Jovito Palparan as head of the 204th IB last week, to "produce" the names of army soldiers who figured in a "mauling incident" on April 20 in Gloria town, Oriental Mindoro, prior to the disappearance of Marcellana and Gumanoy. "I expect Colonel Gomez to comply within the day," Calida said.

Palparan, the controversial former army commander on the island, said the planned intensified probe should include alleged atrocities of the NPA "prior to our assignment in the area."

Singled out

In a phone interview, Palparan demanded: "Why single out the military?"

Asked for a reaction also by phone, Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson, said the revolutionary forces welcomed Palparan's suggestion, "to finally settle the military's lingering black propaganda against (us)."

Rosal added: "The deeper (the probe) the better."

On Sunday, National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the fact-finding team had widened the scope of its probe to avoid suspicions of a whitewash, by including cases involving more alleged military atrocities earlier reported by militant groups.

Wycoco said he was willing to send additional NBI agents to help in the expanded probe.

Yesterday, Calida clarified that the NBI was not conducting a separate probe: "The NBI team is under my operational control as task force head, and as the justice secretary in charge (of the agency)." There are 14 NBI agents currently attached to the fact-finding group.

Calida disclosed task force leads that the activists' murders were related to the April 20 incident. Asked to identify the assailants, he said they were armed but not in military uniform. But "most likely," he said, they were members of the 204th IB "because one of them was positively identified as such."

The civilians had been manhandled, Calida added, because they were suspected to be members or sympathizers of the New People's Army.

Palparan claimed that prior to his troops' arrival in Mindoro in June 2001, the NPA had been "murdering" civilians and barangay officials. Most of the cases were unreported, he said, and those reported had been forgotten.

"But we were able to crush one vital communist front on the island," Palparan said. "We also earned back the trust of local government officials." In fact, he stressed, they were about to finish the task of "liberating" Mindoro, when "these setbacks caused by communist groups" happened.

Terror reign

Rosal urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to bring the matter to the International Criminal Court and "finally unveil all the mysteries behind the reign of terror in Oriental Mindoro," referring to more than 30 cases of alleged summary executions involving the military against activists and civilians.

But the militant group Pamalakaya yesterday castigated the task force for failing to get the side of the victims' families. *Michael Lim Ubac, TJ Burgonio and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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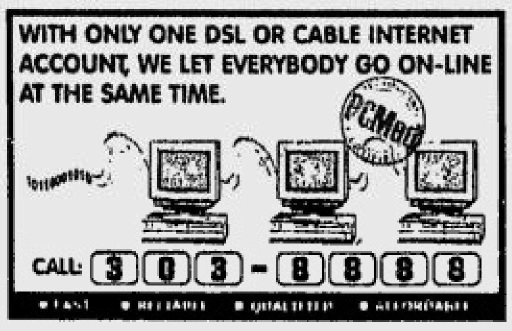

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Cost of RP support: $30M

By D. Pazzibugan

THE COST of supporting the United States-led war on Iraq: $30 million (roughly P1.6 billion).

That is how much the Philippines is getting for its membership in the "coalition of the willing" countries that supported the US-UK war on Iraq despite the lack of United Nations approval.

The Philippines' share is coming from the economic support fund (ESF) in the $78.5-billion Emergency Wartime Supplemental Budget that President George W. Bush is set to sign after it was passed by the US Congress over the weekend.

Of the total amount, $7.9 billion will go to members of the "coalition of the willing." Jordan, Israel and Turkey will get $1 billion each.

Malacañang welcomed the appropriation, saying the money was given by the US to "further the prospects of peace in Mindanao."

"The additional economic assistance is a very strong signal of continuing US support for the Philippines, in general, and for the Macapagal administration's Mindanao peace policy, in particular," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Bunye said the Philippines is hoping for another $30 million in counter-terrorism assistance under the appropriation for foreign military finance (FMF) in the war budget.

He said the Bush administration had "signaled its intent" to provide the additional $30 million.

Ople: UN call backs RP action on Iraq

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Blas Ople yesterday said the United Nations Commission on Human Rights' call for international humanitarian action on Iraq has given added impetus to the Philippines' decision to send a humanitarian mission to that country.

Apparently reacting to criticism from local legislators, Ople said the call to address the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people had come "from all sectors of the international community, from Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the immediate neighbors of Iraq, various world leaders and the Iraqi people themselves."

"The future of the people of Iraq and the stability of the entire region will depend on how well individual nations work together to ensure a viable, democratic and pluralistic Iraq," he said. The Philippines welcomed the UNCHR action, he added.

The Geneva-based body, the main UN human rights forum, adopted the resolution calling for international humanitarian action on Iraq on April 25.

Ople said the Philippines has a "very clear and strategic interest" in the future of Iraq and in the stability of the Middle East.

"It is patently in our national interest to make our own contribution, within our means as a developing country, to see to it that the diverse peoples of Iraq are able to have a future together," he said. *Norman Bordadora*

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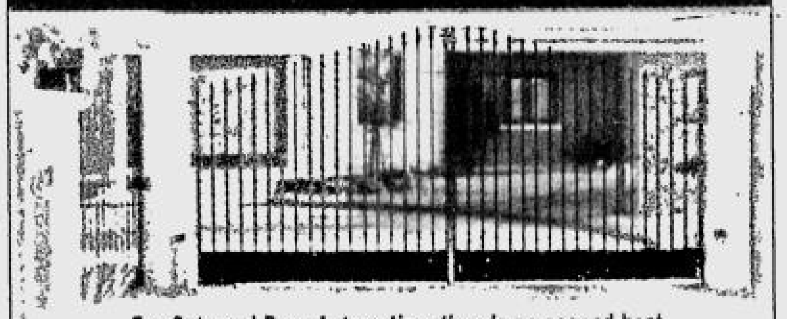

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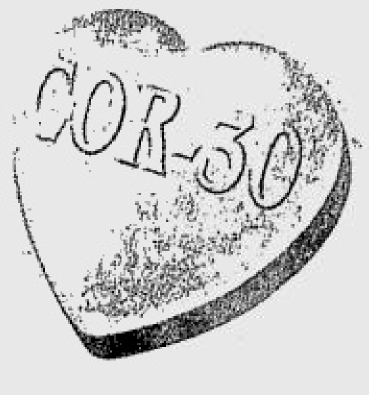

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RP to help Indonesia hunt bombers

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has vowed to help Indonesia hunt down the "terrorists" behind the Jakarta airport blast that injured 11 people last Sunday.

"Terrorism has shuttled between Indonesia and the Philippines and we are both determined to fight it tactically and strategically," the President said yesterday.

The President has blamed the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front for the bombings of the Davao International Airport and the city's Sasa Wharf over the past two months, which killed 48 people and injured more than 200 others.

"If there are any links between terrorist incidents in Jakarta and Mindanao, these will be checked, followed up and neutralized under a scheme of intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation," she said.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, and the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines have been hit hard by a series of deadly bomb attacks blamed largely on Muslim separatists or the Jemaah Islamiyah, an al Qaida-linked group seeking to transform parts of Southeast Asia into an extremist Muslim state.

Indonesian and Philippine authorities have long suspected that Muslim guerrillas in the two countries cooperate in planning and launching attacks.

Philippine intelligence officials have said some Indonesian extremists may have been involved in the attack on the Davao wharf.

Sunday's blast in Jakarta occurred near a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, gift shop and cafe at the airport.

The bombing followed Indonesian police raids last week that resulted in the arrest of 18 suspected Jemaah Islamiyah members, including three wanted in the Bali bombings last October.

A Philippine police intelligence official said one of the 18 arrested men was suspected of having been in charge of training Southeast Asian fighters, possibly including Muslim militants in the southern Philippines.

The MILF has denied involvement in the attacks and rejected allegations it gave terrorist training to Islamic militants based in Indonesia.

The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia have a regional agreement on the sharing of intelligence on counter-terrorism.

Ms Macapagal said she would hold bilateral talks on the issue of terrorism with Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi on the sidelines of a Southeast Asian summit in Thailand on the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak on Tuesday. *AP, AFP with a report from Dona Pazzibugan*

TOPP COPS

PRESIDENT Macapagal-arroyo, middle, poses with this year's The Outstanding Policemen of the Philippines (TOPP) awardees after rites at Malacañang last week. The awardees were Supt. Rodrigo de Gracia, Supt. Raul Medina, SPO2 Octavio Rivero, SPO1 Geronimo Manalo, SPO4 Reynaldo Medina, SPO4 Cesar Calmada, SPO3 Novemito Cala-or, SPO4 Epifras Pnili, PO1 Enrique Dayao and SPO1 Eduardo Sausa. Flanking the President are Louie Basilio, TOPP national chairman, and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina. EDWIN BACASMAS

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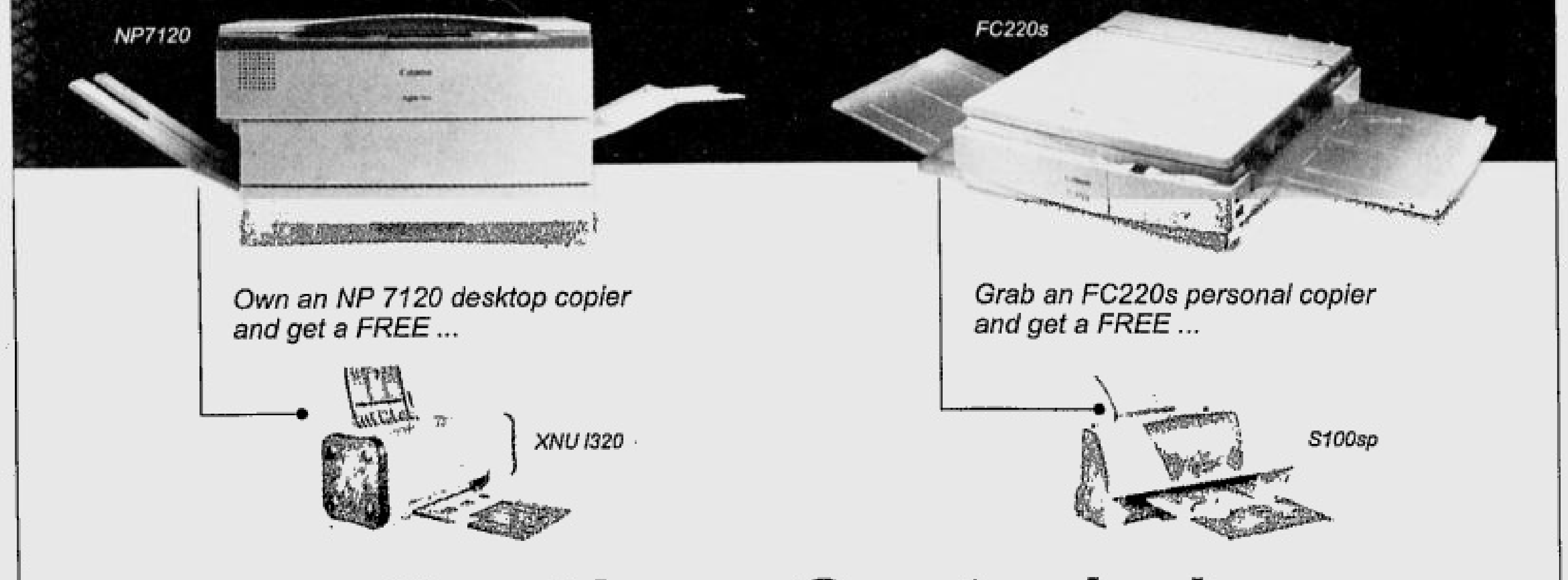
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'Edsa III' leaders say gov't plotting to frame them on Labor Day

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

LEADERS of the so-called "Edsa Tres" revolt yesterday revealed a plot by government agents to sow violence during the May 1 anniversary of the failed uprising by supporters of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada in 2001, in order to justify a crackdown on pro-Estrada personalities and leaders.

Herman Tiu Laurel, a convenor of the "Edsa Tres Commission" (E3C), said the plot was confirmed by the discovery of a list of those who are to be arrested in the crackdown.

He said agents of the National Bureau of Investigation have been allegedly monitoring the movements of the leaders of the pro-Estrada Peoples Movement Against Poverty (PMAP).

"These have been part and parcel of NBI chief Reynaldo Wycoco's fabricated allegations of PMAP and E3C groups' plans to create 'terror' and 'chaos' in the May 1 Edsa Tres celebration," Laurel told a news conference in Quezon City.

Tiu said the list was provided by sources in the Philippine National Police.

Among those to be purportedly arrested are former Estrada Agrarian Reform Secretary Horacio Morales, president of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino; Lito Banayo, PMP secretary general; Crispin Remulla, PMP spokesperson; and Laurel himself.

Laurel said their sources told them that Wycoco had already allegedly prepared written affidavits implicating a number of pro-Estrada leaders to be used in a crackdown on or before May 1.

Cynthia Villarin, PMAP secretary general, said an estimated 50,000 people from the PMAP, PMP and other "Edsa Tres forces" would be joining the anniversary protest on May 1 at the Don Chino Roces (Mendiola) bridge leading to Malacañang.

The Estrada forces and allied labor organizations mobilizing for the Labor Day celebrations at Mendiola will converge at the bridge from 11 a.m. to mid-afternoon.

Villarin said the PMAP has applied for a rally permit with the Manila City Hall and has held talks with the Western Police District to ensure the orderly conduct of the rally.

Citing an "intelligence report" of the PMAP, Laurel said the Macapagal administration has launched a disinformation campaign to sabotage the "Edsa Tres" commemoration and prepare the public for a crackdown.

The report cited retired Army Col. Abraham Purugganan, the undersecretary for special concerns, as allegedly spreading rumors that the PMAP was planning to spring its jailed leader, Ronaldo Lumbao, from jail.

Laurel said Banayo himself had received a call from a certain Jun Mayo who claimed that the NBI's witness in the rebellion charges against opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson arising from the failed power grab was ready to recant his statement in exchange for P15 million.

According to Laurel, this could be disinformation to pave the way for the emergence of a new set of witnesses armed with new affidavits accusing Lacson.

Flavier denies dropping out

ADMINISTRATION Sen. Juan Flavier denied over the weekend that he had dropped out of the 2004 presidential race.

Flavier said he would decide next month whether to make a run for the presidency as this would be when the Pulse Asia opinion poll group is set to release its survey on presidential candidate preferences.

The senator said he wanted to look at the results of the Pulse Asia survey and compare these with those of the Social Weather Stations group which has released its findings.

Flavier said his decision on whether or not to pursue the presidency would be based not only on the SWS and Pulse Asia surveys but on financial considerations, the support of the ruling party, as well as the state of his health. *Christine Avendaño*

BSP tightens credit card rules for banks

By Doris C. Dumlao

TO "SAFEGUARD the quality" of banks' exposure to credit card lending amid mounting unpaid accounts, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is currently preparing new and stricter regulations.

In an interview, Deputy governor for bank supervision Alberto Reyes said the BSP was seeking comments from the Credit Card Association of the Philippines on a blueprint for the classification of credit card receivables.

The classification shall determine the amount of funds that a bank will be required to set aside for loan-loss provisioning which, it is hoped, would curb its appetite to lend.

Under the proposal, Reyes said a credit card account shall be declared "substandard" 31 days after it falls due. At present, a bank is required to make this classification right on the first day that an account falls due.

Reyes said the bank would now be required to put up a loss provision equivalent to 25 percent of the "substandard" account. On the other hand, 180 days after an account falls due, it shall be declared as a "loss" and the bank will have to put up 100 percent provisioning.

"This reclassification is in line with international standards," Reyes said. "We are also consolidating the lending rules and clarifying those applicable to credit cards."

In the past, Reyes said exposure to credit card lending, which did not require collateral, was subjected to the general regulations on non-performing loans.

Solons seek probe of alleged water firm 'overcharging'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A PARTY-LIST representative was set to take to the floor last night the alleged P3.3 billion overcharging of consumers by Meralco's sister company, Maynilad Water Services Inc.

In his scheduled privilege speech, Rep. Mario Joyo Aguja of the group Akbayan had branded as "illegal" 40 percent of Maynilad's water bill.

Earlier, Aguja and four other House members—Marikina Rep. Del de Guzman, Quezon City Rep. Maria Teresa Defensor, Cibac party-list Representatives Joel Villanueva and Kim Bernardo-Lokin—issued a statement seeking a formal House investigation of the alleged overcharging.

They urged the Metro Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System to compel Maynilad to stop collecting its Accelerated Extraordinary Price Adjustment (AEPA), and refund customers the excess charges starting from January 2002.

Maynilad should also pay P5 billion in concession fees that it owes the government, the solons said.

The statement questioned Maynilad's continued charging of P8.28 more per cubic meter for both its AEPA and Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA). Aguja noted that the water firm had been authorized to charge P4.21 per cu m as AEPA until December 2002, to cover foreign exchange losses from 1997. "It is now April 2003," he said.

On the other hand, the P4.08 per cu m FCDA charge was meant to cover forex losses on Maynilad's current concession fee payments. But the firm had not paid the government any part of the P5 billion it owed, Aguja said, even if it had collected P3.3 billion in unauthorized AEPA and FCDA.

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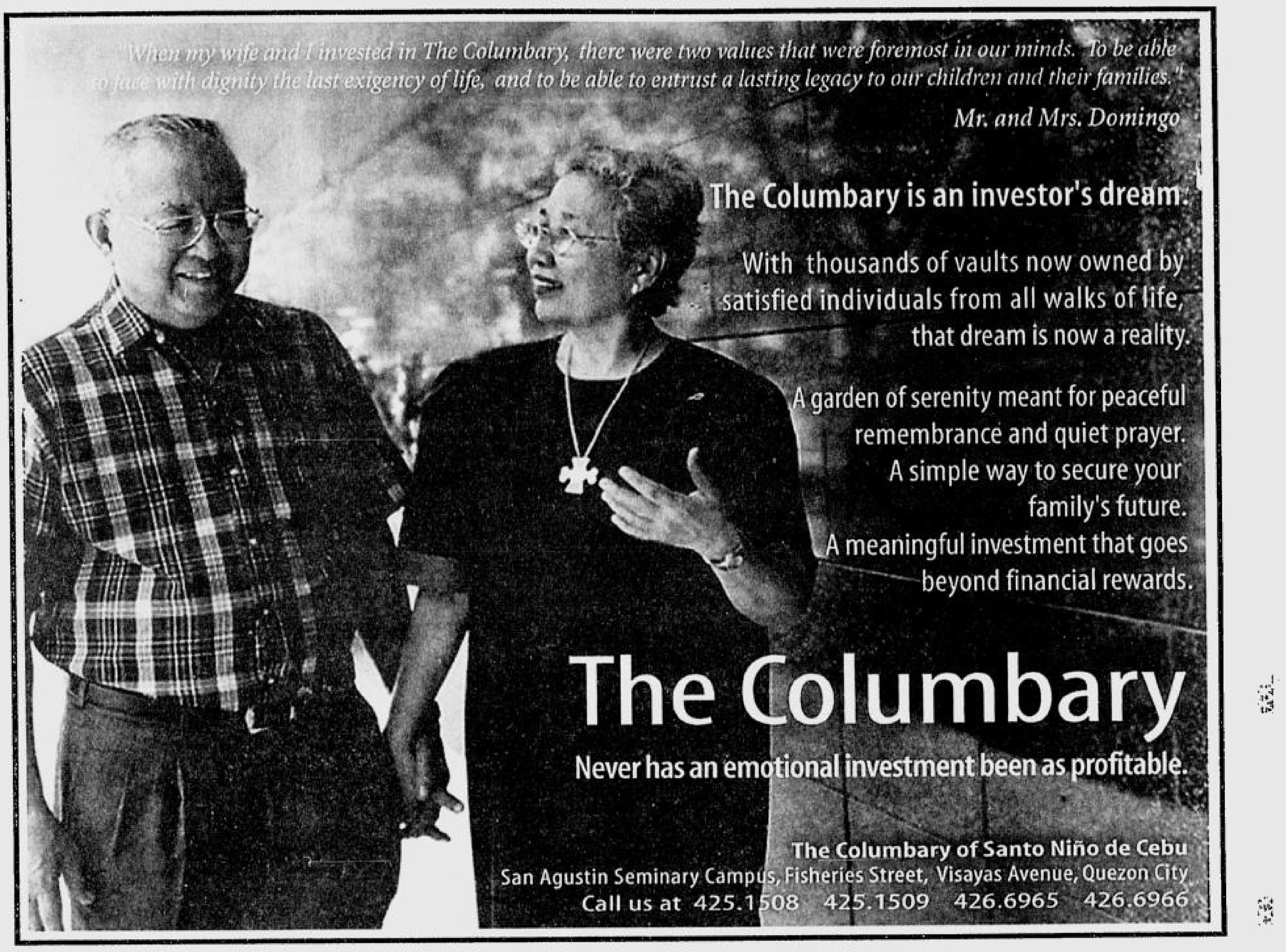

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MSU prof released; 'board and lodging' paid

From page A1

leased by his captors on Sunday night.

An undisclosed amount was allegedly paid Manulat's kidnappers for "board and lodging fees," a euphemism used when officials shell out a fraction of a ransom demand, but his wife said she had no idea who raised the amount. An Associated Press report quoted Manulat as saying that local government and university officials who negotiated his freedom might have paid the fees.

The kidnappers had earlier demanded P2 million in ransom, but the figure was later brought down to P500,000.

Manulat, 46, a professor of the Mindanao State University, was released after weeks of negotiations led by Marawi City Mayor Ali Solitario, Iligan Mayor Franklin Quijano, local mayors of Lanao del Sur and MSU officials led by their president, Camar Umpa.

Quijano said that before Manulat was released, the victim "was held in a place about eight hours behind the MSU. In the evening, he was already in safe hands."

Armed men dragged the professor of the MSU College of Business Administration into a waiting vehicle on Feb. 26 while he was supervising rehearsals by students on the eve of the college's founding day celebration.

Earlier, three female students of the college were also kidnapped, but they were released less than 24 hours later. The kidnappers were believed to be dismissed members of the MSU's peacekeeping force.

Manulat, in a brief talk with the INQUIRER after he was released, said his kidnappers treated him well, especially because he could speak Maranao.

"Some of my kidnappers even made me hold their guns," he said.

But he could not say where exactly he was held. He said about six of his abductors with long firearms took turns guarding him as he was transferred from one forested area to another.

MANULAT PDI DAVAO

Close to MSU

He said he was also brought to a house and finally to a place "close to the MSU because I could already see Lake Lanao."

"There were many chances for me to escape, but I didn't know where to go. The mountains looked the same to me," Manulat said.

He recounted that he and his abductors walked around a lot, sleeping under trees and in cornfields.

"It was like an extended camp-out. The kidnappers brought with them a stove and food like Maggi noodles and sardines," he said. In the AP report, he said he had lost 10 pounds because of the lack of food.

Last week, Manulat's wife Flora told the INQUIRER that for the first time in years, their children—Karen, Carla and Rhede Jr.—had learned to pray together with her every night.

"This we rarely did when Rhede was still with us. His absence has materialized deeply our devotion to God," she said. "We have grown into a strong and loving family."

When Manulat was allowed to call his family the day after he was taken by the kidnappers, Flora even joked to him about the ransom demand: "Two million? *Ang mahal pala ang halaga ng ulo mo,* Dad (Your head is very costly)."

On Holy Thursday, Flora went to Poona Piagapo town in Lanao del Sur to appeal to the kidnappers' negotiators to lower the P500,000 ransom, but they refused to budge.

Change of heart

Flora said she was optimistic that the kidnappers would have a change of heart and eventually release her husband without conditions.

"His relationship with the kidnappers was getting meaningful, for [Nelson] is a good person, and [the kidnappers] must have sensed that," she said.

Flora said she also learned to forgive. "I can't condemn [the kidnappers]. I want to hate them, but I can't."

In Cagayan de Oro City, Manulat told reporters at a military headquarters that he was released to local officials at 1 a.m. on Sunday in Marantao, Lanao del Sur.

He said amateur kidnappers were behind the abduction and not disgruntled former university employees or Moro rebels as earlier speculated.

"I feel good now that finally I have rejoined my family," he said.

With an AP report

What kind of mask one should wear

From page A1

SARS is transmitted through inhalation of aerosol when a patient coughs or sneezes. However, there have been cases without personal contact with a SARS patient. The new coronavirus may survive for up to 24 hours on surfaces according to recent studies from Hong Kong. Touching the infected surface (such as a doorknob) may lead to contamination. SARS may also be shed through feces and spread through faulty plumbing. More studies are being conducted to determine the other ways the virus is spread.

Who should wear masks?

Doctors, nurses and hospital personnel are advised to wear complete protection by the World Health Organization. This requires an N95 respirator mask, protective eyewear or face shields to protect eyes from bodily secretions or blood, gloves and disposable gowns.

SARS patients should wear surgical masks (or if tolerated an N95 mask), when being transported out of their isolation rooms so as not to contaminate others.

There is no advisory regarding masks for the general public despite media pictures of people wearing masks.

What is the N95 respirator mask?

The N95 respirator mask is an industrial mask originally used to protect workers in factories. It is the minimum standard required by the WHO for health-care workers exposed to SARS.

This mask classification has been certified through the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOHS) in the United States. Other respirator masks such as P95, R95, N100 or P100, and the tuberculosis mask 1860 model also comply with requirements.

The letters N, R and P signify the amount of oil exposure which can be tolerated by the mask. N model has the least tolerance for oily environments and P the most tolerance. The numbers 95 and 100 signify the filter efficiency with N95 able to filter out 95 percent of all particle 0.3 micron in size. The SARS virus can be filtered out.* However, proper mask fit is very important.

How do we determine proper fit of the mask?

A respirator mask is only effective if it is worn properly, according to Carla Tabuena, occupational and environmental safety division head of 3M Philippines. The mask should fit snugly around your face. The two straps should be firmly around your head. Adjust the nose bridge slightly to achieve a good fit. When you exhale, there should be no air exiting from the bridge of the nose, the cheek area and the chin. Beards and long moustaches may cause a poor fit.

What kind of mask should the public wear?

There is no advisory from the WHO regarding masks for the general public, so mask use is optional. If you have a cold and are coughing, do wear a mask to prevent contamination.

Cloth masks are not protective. Surgical masks are less effective than respirator masks but are in wide use. There are other respirator masks (such as the 8710 model) which achieve a tight fit, are also highly filter efficient but conform to older NIOHS standards.

How many times can we use the masks?

Ideally, all masks, especially those used by healthcare personnel when entering SARS suspect rooms, should be discarded after one use to avoid cont]aminating other patients. If your mask is visibly damaged with holes or can no longer achieve a tight fit, it should be discarded.

Are there masks for children?

The respirator masks should not be used by children as they were originally designed for industrial use. Children may use modified surgical masks, but again this is not recommended by the WHO.

Will masks completely protect me from SARS?

Respirator masks will reduce exposure and may help protect your lungs but as there are other modes of contamination (through contact and feces), they are not 100-percent effective.

Are there any medical conditions that should be advised against wearing a mask?

Those with asthma, emphysema and other lung diseases should first consult their physician before wearing a respirator mask.

Can used masks be washed?

Cloth masks can be washed for possible reuse, but not surgical masks. A special cleaner can be used for N95 masks. But masks used in a room with a SARS victim should be used only once.

Can masks be exposed to the sun to dry?

Cloth and N95 masks can be exposed to the sun to dry. Ideally, masks should be thrown away after single use.

How can used masks be disposed of?

These can be disposed of in the same way one disposes of dirty needles. A used mask is considered a biological waste.

***Editor's note:** Even N95 masks may offer limited protection from the coronavirus, according to some scientists. Human coronaviruses measure between 0.1 and 0.2 micron. But viruses often travel on large carrier molecules like globs of mucus, making it easier to filter them. A human hair is roughly 100 microns in diameter.

(The author is a lung specialist trained at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. She is a diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine.)

Iraqis honor …

From page A1

24-year reign.

"For the first time in my life, I won't be forced to attend Saddam's birthday ceremonies. He was a dictator, he was nothing but a donkey ruling over Iraq," said Ali, 24.

The young man, speaking in the Sadr city neighborhood formerly known as Saddam City and home to about two million Shiite Muslims, said most Iraqis had been "faking joy on Saddam's birthday each year because we were plain afraid."

"We'll bring the donkey flowers and a cake this afternoon," said Hassan al-Hussein, 27, who helped organize the ceremony here.

Crowds of young boys were clapping their hands in appreciation as a man planted a banner and a colorful plastic tree by the donkey.

"April 28, it's your birthday you loser!" read the sign. Saddam turned 66 on Monday although his whereabouts, if he is even still alive, are unknown.

Pictures of Saddam and his two equally feared sons, Uday and Qusay, were also on display.

"We won't kill the animal although he represents Saddam the criminal, because donkeys are as oppressed as we were for years," said al-Hussein.

Unmoved by the feast to come, women were casually dumping piles of rubbish in the middle of the street, which was flooded with green, fetid sewage.

But not everybody was in the mood to mock the toppled dictator.

"More important things are on my mind frankly," said Hassan Khusai, 35.

"We want our rights as Shiites to be secured, we want an indigenous government to rule over Iraq," he said, slamming US-backed opposition leaders such as Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi.

Others were still clearly afraid to speak their minds.

"Maybe it's good he was toppled … but we had enough to eat under Saddam, now it's a mess," mumbled Samia Aziz, 40, checking over her shoulder as she spoke with a fearful look in her eyes.

"A lot of people still believe Saddam is alive and that he's coming back, maybe even today on his birthday," said Mohammed al-Hussein, 37.

"I personally believe Saddam is dead or left the country, but you have to understand that a culture of fear was cultivated for decades by the old regime," he said.

AFP

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	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
Filipino	₱27,000.00	₱12,000.00	₱10,000.00

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	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
Filipino	₱17,000.00	₱10,000.00	₱7,000.00
English	₱17,000.00	₱10,000.00	₱7,000.00

Poetry, Essay, One-act Play and Short Story for Children Categories

	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
Filipino	₱12,000.00	₱9,000.00	₱7,000.00
English	₱12,000.00	₱9,000.00	₱7,000.00

Teleplay Category

	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
Filipino	₱12,000.00	₱9,000.00	₱7,000.00

Kabataan Essay

	First Prize	Second Prize	Third Prize
Filipino	₱8,000.00	₱5,000.00	₱3,000.00
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Pacificador not likely to return

By Michael Lim Ubac

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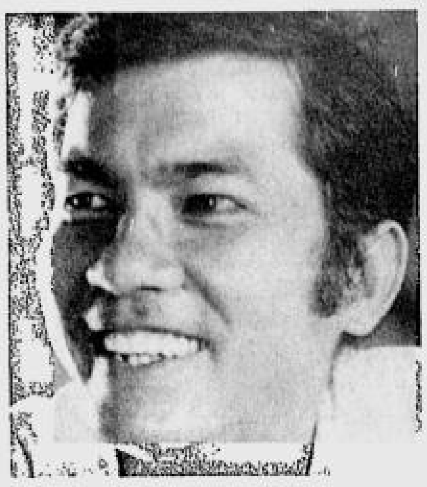
Pacificador is one of 18 accused in the murder of former Antique Gov. Evelio Javier and the wounding of several others in February 1986.



JAVIER

His father, former Assemblyman Arturo Pacificador, and 11 others are on trial for their alleged roles in the murder.

But Gutierrez, who is in charge of all extradition cases being handled by the DOJ, said that Pacificador suffered a legal setback in Canada.

He had sought refugee status but the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) denied his application, Gutierrez said.

This prompted Pacificador to ask the Federal Court of Canada last month to allow him to appeal the IRB ruling. The request was granted by the federal court. The appeal will be heard by the federal court on June 24.

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But, she said, "I don't think he would be deported to the Philippines... because deportation does not guarantee that a person would be sent back to his country of origin."

It was likely Pacificador would be deported to the United States where he had come from prior to going to Canada, she said.

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Miners fear loss of their share of gold to gov't

By Christine A. Gaylican

COMPOSTELA VALLEY—An organization of small-scale miners in Mt. Diwalwal, Compostela Valley, is urging the environment department to reconsider its proposed amendments to Administrative Order No. 35, which concerted the Mt. Diwalwal mining area into a mineral reservation.

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Franco Tito, CFMC founder and barangay captain, said the farmers fear that the revisions would allow the government to increase its mineral production share in Diwalwal, currently at 15 percent, to the disadavantage of small-scale miners.

According to proposed amendments, the government's share would be subject to negotiations by the Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) based on the gross value of the gold produced and sold by the service contractors.

Tito said that if the government were to follow this tack, there would be little left for the small miners to make money from.

He said 15 percent taken by the government as its share of the mineral production was already enough of a burden for the small miners.

Tito, who has been working in Diwalwal for the past 19 years, welcomed the issuance of the AO 35 last year as it legalized the operation of small-scale miners in Diwalwal.

"This will be the first time that we will be paying our taxes so we really want this (AO 35) to work," said Tito.

The CFMC also does not favor the transfer of the management of the Mt. Diwalwal gold rush site to the NRDC.

"We still want the Mines and Geosciences Bureau to be at the forefront of the management. We do no trust the NRDC on this aspect because they don't have any experience in minerals area management," said Tito.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun said the amendments to AO 35 have yet to be finalized and that public consultations with the people of Mt. Diwalwal are still going on.

Maning Silva, veteran photojournalist, dies

VETERAN photojournalist Manuel "Maning" Silva died Sunday after a lingering illness.

He is survived by his wife Zeny, children Renato and Mimi, Raul, Noel, Celine and Kiko Rosario, Lia and Kai Jugo, and grandchildren.

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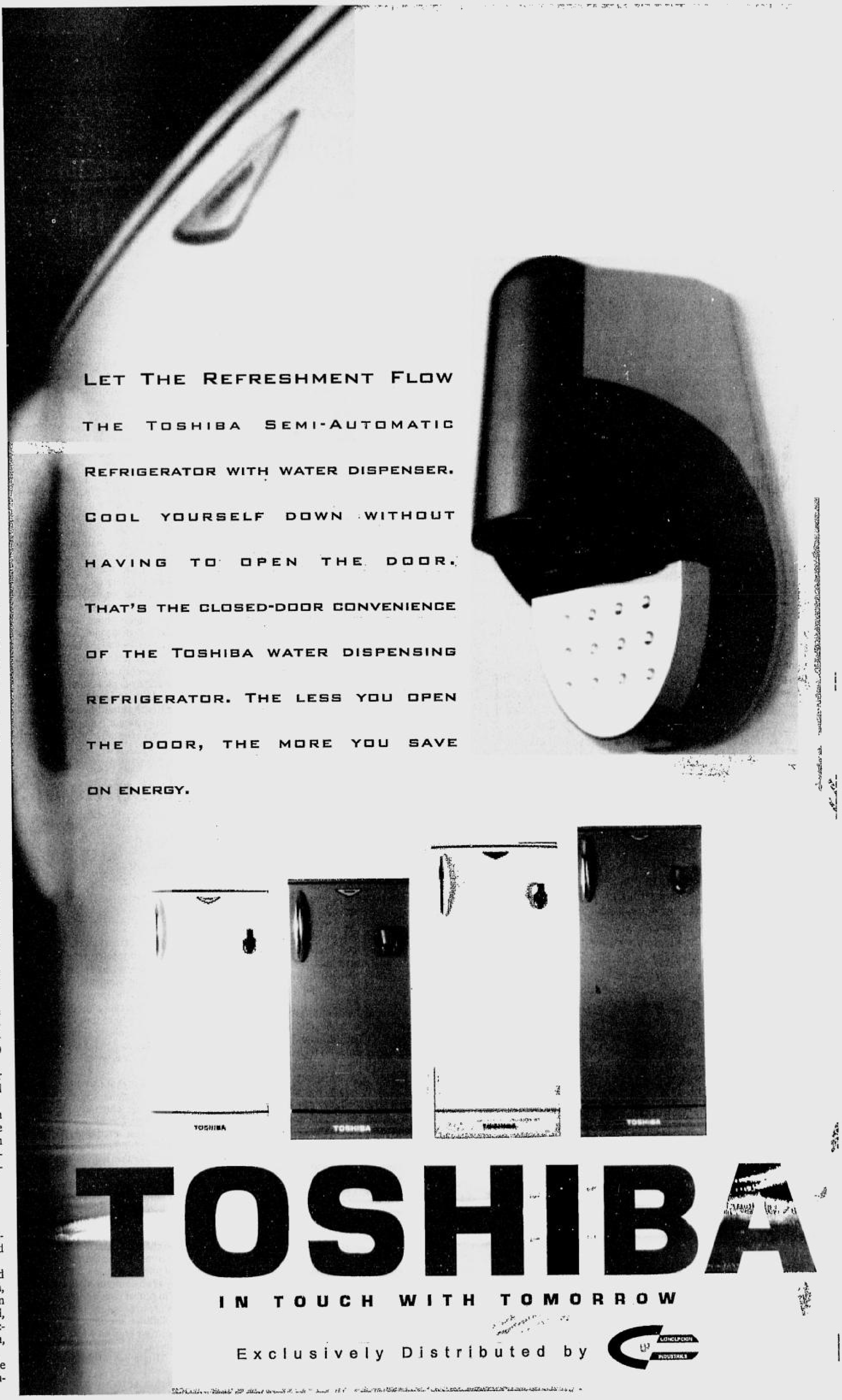

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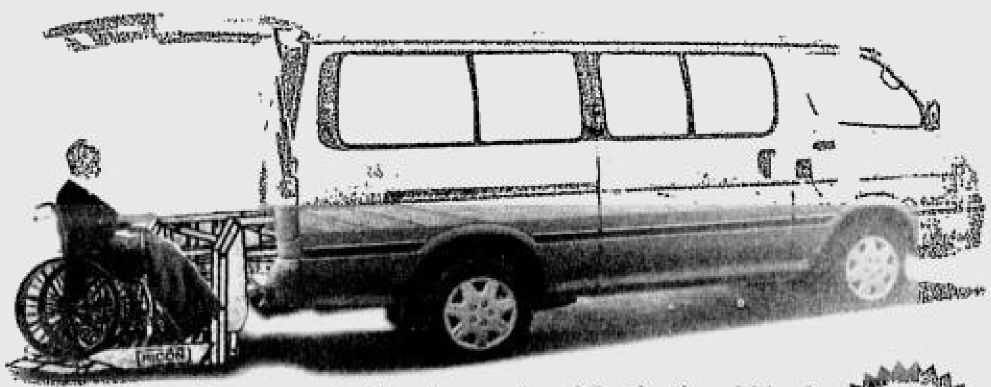

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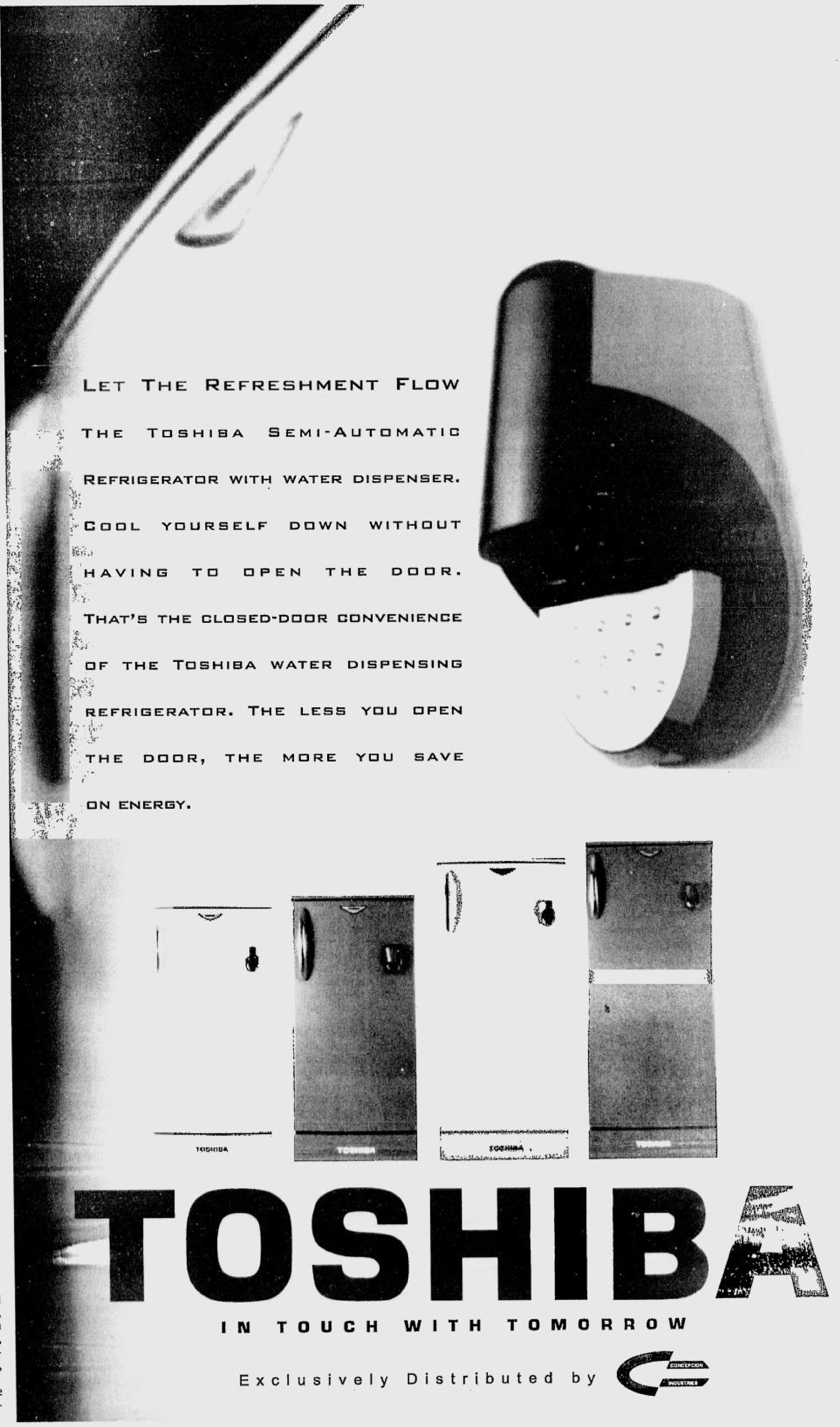

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OPINION

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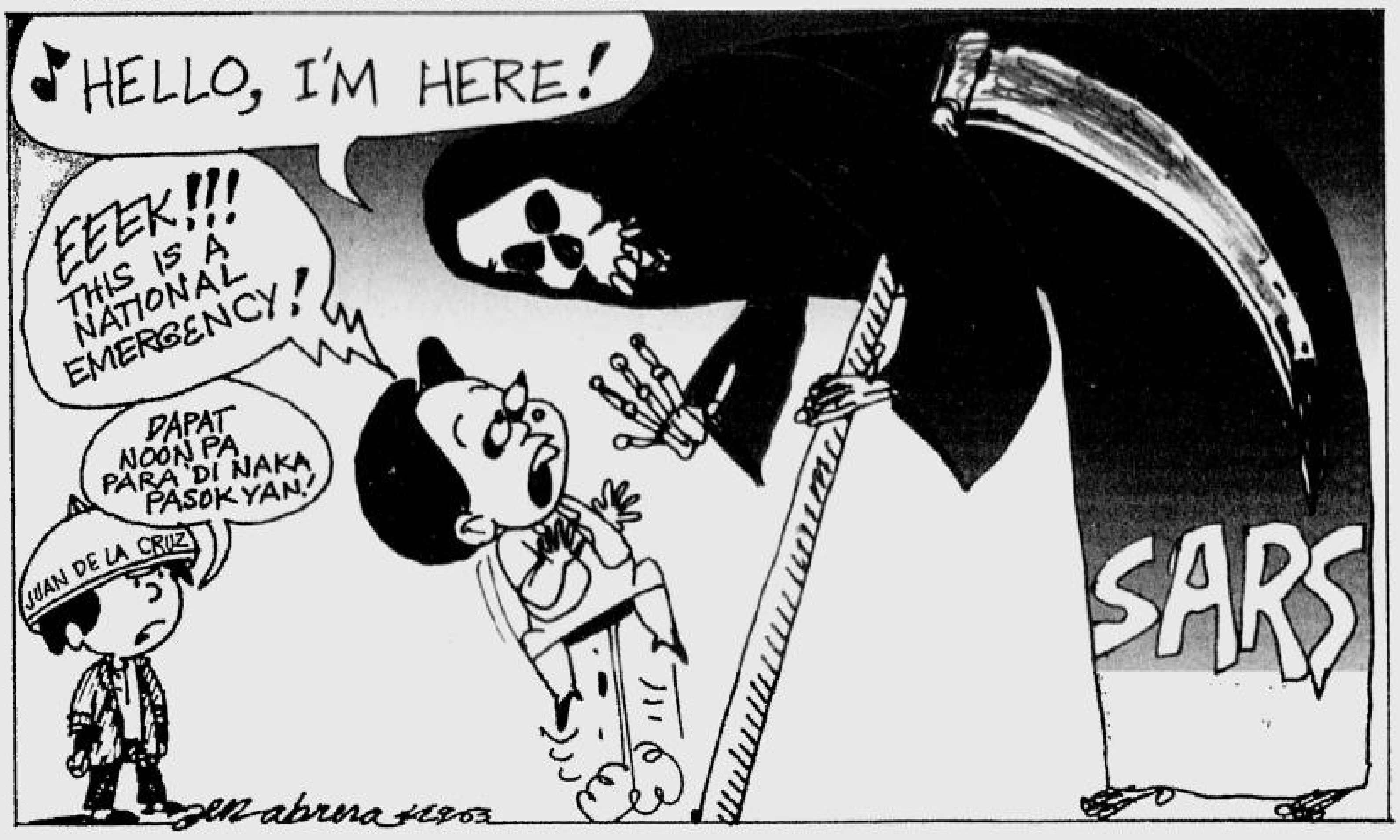
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DAPAT NOON PA PARA 'DI NAKA PASOK YAN.!
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SARS
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Baywalk

EDITORIAL

THOUSANDS of Manilans who chose to stay in the city for the Holy Week spent some time on the recently completed promenade by the bay which is called Baywalk by some. They found the promenade a good recreation and leisure place where one can walk, bike, jog, read a book or just rest on a bench and enjoy a cool refreshing drink.

Early in the morning, the Baywalk is a biker's, jogger's and walker's haven. In the afternoon, people sit on the seawall or on the benches to watch the famous sunset over Manila Bay and enjoy the sea breeze. In the evening, they can stroll from one end to the other end of the promenade without fearing that they would be mugged or held up. The place is lighted by multi-colored globes that look like permanent *parol* (Christmas lanterns). These orbs are a delight to see at night.

Some restaurants have put up cafés and kiosks that do a booming business on weekends. On weekends, too, some small bands stage concerts that draw young and old alike.

The promenade is wide and paved with interlocking tiles said to be laid on a sand bed. Some environmentalists have expressed the fear that the tiles were embedded in concrete, which would prevent rainwater or seawater from the bay from seeping into the soil. We hope they were not laid on concrete because that would cause flooding of a portion of Roxas Boulevard during the rainy season.

There are many park benches, tables and chairs. There is one bench where a bigger-than-life bronze statue of Mayor Arsenio Lacson—said to be the best mayor Manila ever had—sits, reading a newspaper. (A shot of that statue, together with a man reading the INQUIRER, has been used to illustrate an INQUIRER ad.) Lovers can enjoy some privacy on wooden swings covered by thatched roofs.

Some weekend fishermen try their luck with all sorts of fishing rods, but so far they are like the anti-graft agencies and officials—all they've caught are small fry and not the big fish.

Overall, the promenade is good place to relax in. But could the planners and builders not have set aside more space for trees, plants or shrubs? Greens are very soothing to the eyes and they can help clean the city's polluted air. It would also be better if the seawater by the seawall could be cleaned of all sorts of flotsam and jetsam. The stink from all the detritus can turn off people with sensitive noses.

Some people take a dip at the bay. We are afraid that one of these days, some of them may die not from drowning but from accidentally swallowing big amounts of the dark, polluted water.

It would help, also, if more trash cans were placed in strategic places. Because of the lack of garbage receptacles, trash is often strewn around by mindless, undisciplined promenaders. Street sweepers ought to be assigned to the place day and night to keep it clean.

Mayor Lito Atienza is justifiably proud of the Baywalk, which he said is one of the best accomplishments of his "Buhayin ang Maynila" urban renewal program. He started with the rehabilitation of Plaza Miranda and the airconditioning of the Quiapo underpass. He would be doing the city a big favor if he could also revive the Escolta, which has gone to seed, and Rizal Avenue, which has suffered a blight since the Light Rail Transit was made to pass through it.

Not all the cities and towns of Metro Manila have bays like Manila or rivers like Marikina, but we believe their mayors and boards can think of many ways to make their municipalities more beautiful, cleaner, less polluted and more receptive to civilized, not to mention, gracious living.

For starters, why doesn't the Metro Manila Development Authority get the mayors together so they can draw up an integrated plan for the development of more parks and mini-forests in the metropolis? The lack of parks has driven people to the malls on weekends. The mall proprietors are not complaining, but surely a greener, more exhilarating and healthier alternative can be offered to the people by opening more parks, mini-forests and playgrounds. Parks are the lungs of the metropolis; they can make the air cleaner and less polluted.

And for the cities and towns through which the Pasig River runs, the mayors could more actively support the continuing effort of former First Lady Ming Ramos' Pasig River project to revive the waterway. Marikina's river revival project could be a model for the others.

Metro Manila has become so polluted, so dirty and so ugly that any project to make living in it more bearable would certainly be welcome.

SARS will change religious, social, political practices

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

SARS will have a far-reaching impact not only on the health habits of Filipinos but also on their religious, social and political practices. The deadly SARS virus spreads through close personal contact. It spreads through the air via droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can be transferred by the hand and through the mouth and nose. You can get it by merely listening to a carrier talking from across the table. So the fear of getting SARS will change the behavior of many Filipinos.

Jaime Cardinal Sin has already advised the Catholic faithful not to receive holy communion from the hands of the priest. Receive the host in your palm and then put it in your mouth yourself, he said. That does not guarantee that the host will not be infected, but since the advice comes from a prince of the Church, at least you get the feeling that God will look after you.

The cardinal has also advised his flock to stop kissing the statues and photographs of saints, an idolatrous practice that infuriates born again Christians. That is one of the fastest ways to get SARS. That should diminish the number of people kissing the feet of the Black Nazarene of Quiapo or rubbing their sweepstakes and lotto tickets on it.

But what would happen to the Black Nazarene procession every January 9, when devotees fight to get near the figure of the Nazarene, wipe their towels on its feet or face and later kiss those towels? The faithful believe that that practice banishes illness miraculously, even SARS. Will the cardinal's advice stop that, too? The colorful Nazarene procession will not be the same again.

But if the devotees continue doing that, there could be less and less of them at the annual procession as SARS inevitably takes its toll. In fact, just joining the procession, even without kissing the Nazarene's feet, is already a very risky proposition. With so many people in very close contact, SARS can spread like wildfire.

SARS will also change social gatherings. The *beso-beso* may have to go. And I think forcing children to kiss the cheeks and hands of their elders unnecessarily puts them at risk.

But I think the biggest impact of SARS will be on political practices. The virus can be transferred by a mere handshake. And handshakes are synonymous with politics. One handshake usually translates into one vote, or at least the candidate hopes so. So the more hands a candidate shakes, the more votes he should get. Former President Diosdado Macapagal, the incumbent President's father, became president by traveling the length and breadth the archipelago shaking as many hands he could reach. That was all he did during his term as vice president of President Garcia and it catapulted him to the presidency. Other politicians have been following his example ever since. But SARS will change all that.

By the law of averages, the more hands you shake, the higher the chances that you will be infected with SARS. Any sensible person knows that handshaking is a very unhygienic and unsanitary practice. The sensible Mandaluyong candidate Vicky Garchitorena knew that, so after each day of campaigning, she reportedly washed her hands with alcohol. A sensible precaution. But when the Mandaluyong voters heard about it, they felt insulted and did not vote for her. Mandaluyong lost the chance of having an able and hygienic administrator.

So what should the politician do in the face of the SARS threat? Should he continue with handshaking and risk not being able to finish his term or give it up completely and with it the votes?

Two more political practices that are threatened by SARS are the campaign rally and the campaign speech before lunches, dinners and meetings. The virus can be spread simply by talking and that is what politicians specialize in. They think that the more they talk, the more votes they get. But they could also be spreading plenty of SARS viruses and the chances are their listeners wouldn't be alive by election time. The smart ones may choose not to attend such gatherings to save themselves, so there would be less and less attendance at Rotary, Jaycee and Lions' meetings, and so they will lose their appeal to politicians.

As for campaign rallies, just attending one even if you don't listen to the interminable speeches or even get near the speakers is risky because so many people stand close to one another. The chances of getting infected is very high. So more and more of the smart ones will stay away from those rallies and all that would be left would be the *hakot* crowd bought by the candidates. So the campaign rally will also lose its appeal for the candidates.

The campaign effort will shift to newspaper advertisements, television and radio commercials, and political posters and flyers. Even the latter is risky because handbills passing from hand to hand increases the chances of spreading the virus. Voters will also prefer to listen to their candidates on television or read about them in the newspapers rather than see them personally and shake their hands.

But like the silver lining behind dark clouds, one hopeful effect of the SARS scare is that it may reduce vote-buying. Why? Money is the dirtiest object you can touch. It is full of bacteria and germs and viruses of all sorts, including SARS. So the money to be paid for votes would be very dirty, both figuratively and literally. That may discourage voters from accepting money in exchange for their votes.

But I only said may—and I hope it does. I doubt if even SARS will scare people from doing this dirty deed.

Fear in the time of SARS

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

HEALTH Secretary Manuel Dayrit's admission that this country is no longer SARS-free is scary.

Dayrit made the admission last week after Mauricio Catalon, who died last April 22, showed signs of the disease in an autopsy. Mauricio was the father of Adela, who worked as a nurse in Canada but came home to Pangasinan early last month to attend to him. As Mauricio was suffering as well from abdominal cancer, nobody thought at first that he died from SARS. An analysis of his body revealed otherwise. "His lungs showed bronchopneumonia," said Dayrit, "which could have been the immediate cause of his death."

So far, we've had four cases of SARS (Dayrit has dropped the modifier "probable," deciding to err on the side of caution), including a 64-year-old German national who recovered and has left the country, and a 47-year-old Filipino maid in Hong Kong who just returned to her hometown in Eastern Samar. Mauricio is the first case of the disease being contracted locally.

It's scary for many reasons. Not the least of them is that it does not require any particular lifestyle for it to spread, which AIDS does. AIDS needs an intimate physical relationship or transfusion of contaminated blood to contract. You need only to congregate and come into contact with the saliva of an infected SARS victim to catch it. No one is sure about the extent of its virulence.

AIDS at least can be curbed by lessening promiscuity and wearing protection. You cannot stop people from congregating, day or night. Most people have to work, and some have to play at night in beer and karaoke houses. Well, you can minimize SARS too by radical steps, such as by wearing masks and living a hermetic life after work, which people in the much ravaged countries like China, Hong Kong and Singapore have been doing of late. I guess that's a lifestyle change too, of dynastic proportions.

What particularly scares the hell out of me is the question of our own preparedness to meet an emergency of this scale and severity. Unlike the threats of foreign terrorists detonating chemical bombs in our air and water supply or smuggling weapons of mass destruction to the MILF, the threat of SARS decimating our population is not phantasmagoric. It is real. It is nothing to reduce to text jokes. Heaven forbid the ghastly irony that we dredged up demons to defend the indefensible only to be defenseless when visited by real ones.

The saving grace is that Dayrit is on top of this thing. I know Manolet and can say with confidence there's no one more devoted to health than he. That doesn't mean my fears have been laid to rest. At the very least, the problem lies well beyond the DOH, it lies with public attitudes. We are not the most disciplined of peoples. For many reasons. Most of us will not naturally seek medical help at the first sign of trouble for the simple reason that we cannot afford it. We'll wait till we cough blood before we consult a doctor—and only after trying all sorts of medicines, traditional and modern, herbal and chemical, first.

We do have communities that still try to exorcise *kulam* before reporting afflictions. More generally, we have a community that often reposes its faith in prayer over antibiotics. Many of its members are to be found in prayer rallies on weekends. I'm not knocking prayer, but it should be employed only as a last resort. I'm not a control freak, but I'm terrified by the picture that says, "There but for the grace of God goes the Filipino."

On top of all this, we have our notorious culture of privilege and "exceptionalism." In other countries, like Singapore and Hong Kong, you'll see people wearing colored arm bands and whole places being quarantined. They do not particularly like it, but they do not make a fuss about it. That applies to rich and poor, weak and powerful. I don't know if the same thing can be done here. The people who routinely sport sirens in their cars and are escorted on busy streets by motorcycle-riding cops on an ordinary day, are not bound to be very docile when herded at Naia and other public places. The rule applies to everyone, except them—or so they think. Several congressmen did suggest that the President was exempt from quarantine when returning home from her travels.

Well, the bad news is that SARS, like death, is the great leveler. It lays low maids and mayors, lords and lepers, paupers and presidents.

I can only hope this apocalyptic vision compels us to discover the virtue of discipline and the wisdom of vigilance, as adversity has a way of making us do. Look how we rise to heroic heights during earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other cataclysms. I don't particularly mind that people spread fearful rumors about the spread of the disease. The real virus as far as we Filipinos are concerned is not paranoia but smugness. Better to err on the side of fear. This is one catastrophe that isn't met by gallows humor, the gallows being a good bet to follow the humor. This is one adversity where the lessons, when they come, are bound to be too late.

Additionally, I hope this hellish pass compels us to see with blinding clarity how utterly skewed our priorities are. GMA has just passed a budget that gives P42.6 billion to the military and P10.4 billion to health. Dayrit hasn't much to go on. That of course is not unique to us but applies to the country we worship as well. The UN reckons that just a tenth of US military expenditures, or $40 billion, would be enough to give everyone on this planet the basic essentials of life. That probably applies to eradicating disease too. It's human folly that has driven us to this pass. But that is another story.

One best left to when we survive this one.

Crucial lunch meeting today

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AT noon today, a group of senators and representatives will sit down to a luncheon hosted jointly by Senators Edgardo Angara and Robert Barbers and Speaker Jose de Venecia at the Mandarin Hotel. Their urgent topic is Charter change and the three hosts are expected to push for a constituent assembly as the superior way of effecting change, instead of a constitutional convention. Angara and Barbers authored the Senate resolution pushing for a constituent assembly while De Venecia is the prime mover in the House, together with other representatives like Eduardo Nachura, Gerry Espina and Constantino Jaraula, who got the assembly proposal approved by an overwhelming majority in March. The bicameral group pushing for constitutional reforms that's meeting today is obviously aware that time is of the essence. But it's also buoyed by the thought that more senators are now open to the idea of a constituent assembly. Reports indicate that a dozen senators are in favor of it.

* * *

For more than a year now, Cecile Alvarez and I have been running a 9:15 p.m. Sunday radio program over dzRH on various efforts by the government as well as the private sector to alleviate poverty. Lately we have been so excited by the concept of the Macapagal administration's "Strong Republic Nautical Highway," more popularly known as the "Roll-On, Roll-Off" Terminal System that we didn't rest till we succeeded in getting Land Bank chair Vitaliano Nañagas as our guest despite his very busy schedule.

Listening to him last Sunday (he will be on the program again this Sunday) proved even more exciting, as he described how the Roro concept spelled out by President Macapagal's Executive Order 170 will develop the country's "western seaboard." This western seaboard will complement the Pan-Pacific Highway in the eastern part that runs from Manila through Bicol and Eastern Visayas up to Surigao down to Davao. The beauty of the Roro concept is that it will stir up domestic tourism as well as link up farm and fish products with markets elsewhere in a more efficient and less costly manner. How? By "stringing" the various islands in our archipelago, from Manila, through Mindoro, Panay, Negros Oriental and all the way to Dipolog in Northwestern Mindanao. What has emerged is a kind of "nautical highway" where the Roros in effect become a series of "floating bridges" between the islands. As a result, instead of goods being loaded and unloaded in ships at various ports, affecting the freshness of, say, vegetables and fish, trucks carrying them can now simply get on the Roro and roll to where the goods are needed.

* * *

Nañagas noted that the annual spillage in the production of corn, 70 percent of which comes from Mindanao, amounts to about P4.5 billion, while the total wastage of farm products runs up to about P35 billion, mainly because of poor storage and transport facilities. *Nabubulok*, thus compounding the problems of poor farmers. On the other hand, there are some 2,000 hectares of fish farms in the hinterlands of Dipolog that are underproducing, while in Metro Manila and elsewhere fish prices go up during certain seasons because of inadequate supply. This does not include the vast expanse of the China Sea under Philippine waters that are now being used by Taiwanese and Indonesian fishermen perhaps because Filipino fishermen are not encouraged to produce more fish due to transport problems. The Roro system comes in to link up producers and consumers and it's easy to see how this will help alleviate poverty among farmers and fisherfolk.

* * *

As Nañagas explained it, this project is an inter-agency effort. The DOTC supervises the building of modern ports and the DPWH builds access roads to the ports, so that the DTI can invite investors to come in with more Roro boats or modern silos for grains storage and refrigeration facilities for vegetables and fish, etc. On the other hand, the finance department will help look for fund sources for these projects, while the DBP will provide long-term loans to investors at low interest rates. The DBP chair revealed that while Roros cost between P50 million and 80 million each, the DBP can lend up to 70 percent of the amount to worthy investors.

* * *

Perhaps what I like most is the fact that with the Roro, we Filipinos can now afford to travel around our country and see for ourselves its beauty, which foreigners say is second to none. Cecile and I relished with Nañagas the idea that bus passengers can now travel to Boracay at a cost of only P600 for a little over half a day by land and sea. Thus, Boracay now will no longer be the exclusive enclave of the rich. The Roro also opens up places like Puerto Galera in Mindoro, Iloilo, Dumaguete and Dipolog. Dumaguete is so scenic, with its famed Apo Reef which, according to divers, is more beautiful than anything Bali or Australia has to offer. Lovely Dipolog is next door to Dapitan where Rizal went on exile and fell in love with the place. Scenic Puerto Galera is just an hour's Roro ride from the Batangas port. This May 1-4 holiday let's take advantage of the Roro.

* * *

Being an outspoken cleric, Fr. Robert Reyes, former parish priest of the UP Catholic community in Diliman who was recently transferred to the Parish of the Miraculous Medal in Project 4, Quezon City, has stirred enough controversy to last a lifetime. Even his running for various militant causes has caught the ire of critics who say that's all he seems to do. But few know that in the seven years that he shepherded the UP community, Father Robert also put in a lot of studying in addition to running. Last Sunday he was among those who marched at the UP commencement exercises, earning a doctorate in anthropology, with his 500-page thesis written in Pilipino.

Malice in the e-mail

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I'M GRATEFUL to INQUIRER Online columnist Billy Esposo for warning his fellow opinion writers in this paper about how our names are being hijacked by bogus e-mail correspondents.

As Conrad de Quiros wrote in his column yesterday, people using his and my name have been referring columns written by other people that would tend to contradict our own views, specifically on the war in Iraq, to other columnists like Billy. As Conrad points out, he has enough to do answering his e-mail to take the time and bother to forward the columns of others, especially those writing for rival papers.

I mean, hellooo? It's all we can do to find time to churn out columns every blessed day to make sure Inquirer readers are entertained and enlightened (or incensed and irritated). Wherever and whyever would we find the time and energy to direct others to read our rivals?

When I could still access my Inquirer e-mail box, I used to get mail from columnists in other papers, too, only to open the messages and find either drivel (a sure sign a virus had hopped on to it) or some other person's article. But since the columnists were my friends and I knew where they stood on certain issues, I just ignored the attachments and forwards. If my friends wanted to convince me to take a certain stand, they could very well pick up the phone and invite me to lunch!

I don't know who's using this very crude form of -- I don't know, is it exactly black propaganda? I guess it would be if the columnists I'm supposed to be forwarding aren't exactly the soul of erudition. I have my suspicions about who could be borrowing my name, but I'm too lazy to investigate. Anyone who gets forwards from me, then, had better be warned that I have neither time nor inclination to make others read articles that I had no hand in creating.

* * *

BUT while we're at it, I might as well say here that I haven't had access to my "inquirer.com" e-mail box for almost a year now. There's some technical glitch or other at work here, but no one has so far come up with a workable solution. Meantime, I use a personal e-mail address for electronic correspondence, and I do apologize to everyone who's written to my Inquirer address and has been met with silence. I haven't said anything about this because I've been hoping the bright boys in our I.T. section could find a solution to my problem, but so far, zilch. Meantime, if you really want to reach me by e-mail, you can write our opinion section and I hope they'll forward your messages to me.

So if anyone receives a message, forward or attachment using my Inquirer address, you can be sure it's fake because it can't have come from me.

Isn't it fascinating how the Internet, which was invented to facilitate and protect the free flow of information around the world, is now being used for all sorts of criminal and malicious activity? We may come up with the most dazzling technical innovations for the loftiest of avowed purposes. But trust human beings to use this same technology for the basest of reasons and desires.

Tim Burners Lee, look what you've wrought!

* * *

NOTES: I met with a classmate from high school in Maryknoll, Dr. Lillian Lopez-Villafuerte, who's now a dermatologist holding clinic at the Manila Doctor's Hospital, Medical Plaza Ortigas and The Medical City.

"Lilliput," as we called her in high school, also happens to chair the Philippine Environmental and Occupational Dermatology Group (PEODG) which is marking its second anniversary on July 26. The Group is seeking NGOs and other civic groups it can partner with in medical outreach projects and lectures to raise awareness about various environmental and occupational skin diseases and problems. Those interested may contact Dr. Villafuerte or any of the other officers of the PEODG: vice-chair Dr. Nenita L. Alberto, secretary Dr. Ma. Angela Lavadia, treasurer Dr. Noemi S. Ramos, PRO Dr. Cecilia T. Marcelo, and board members Drs. Jesusa B. Tan, Bernadette Arcilla and Gertrude Chan.

* * *

MEANTIME, the Philippine Association of Retired Persons (Parp) held its annual convention last Saturday, April 26 at the Insular Life Auditorium in Makati.

Organized in 1999, Parp was founded to address "the injustice heaped upon retirees who for many years continue to receive an average monthly pension way below minimum wage." It has since fought for increased pensions and other benefits of retirees from both the Social Security System and the GSIS.

In a letter to the members, Parp president Amado Cabaero sounded the alarm on the financial status of the SSS, which according to a COA audit report has a negative balance of about P1.7 billion as of 2001. The Parp study unearthed what it calls "many cases of irregular loans and investments of SSS (that) painted a picture of criminal complicity and gross infidelity of the then top SSS officials to the best interest of the SSS members."

While Parp has taken the initiative to hale to court the SSS officials responsible for the sorry financial state of the institution (led by former SSS president Carlos Arellano), Cabaero says the association alone cannot do much. "To be really effective and be counted as a force to contend with, all 24 million SSS members need to unite and, as owners of SSS, express publicly their public indignation at the ravaging of the SSS."

You don't have to be a retiree to feel threatened by the looming bankruptcy of the SSS. If you're an employee in the private sector (like me!), then your future is at stake. Let your voice be heard now!

'Tiangge' on my mind

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

IT started out with Baclaran many years ago, with the constant threat of the police every now and then getting a fit of energy and driving the vendors off like Christ did at the temple to the money changers. Obviously it didn't work; on the contrary there seem to be even more of them these days. Amid all those dusters and maid's uniforms, you find the best seafood market in town and, if you're adventurous, there are cooks at the back who will whip out a dish of prawns in chili sauce in no time at all that you can eat right there or take home for a family meal.

Baclaran however was only copying Divisoria, a market that has been there as far back as anyone of us can remember and more. It probably started with Father Benavidez and the Parian outside Intramuros and has only recently been altered with the construction of a mall with a wet market in the basement. But all around it are the usual vendors clogging up the narrow streets like they've always done.

I'm told by the cognoscenti that these are mostly smuggled items fronting for deep nefarious forbidden goods, but since when did that bother any of us? The goods are packed tight into stalls so you need tremendous patience to find sizes (anything larger than a two) and fit a pair of pants over the ones you're wearing! (If you're smart wear a skirt instead.) There are Guccis, Pradas, Diors, Chanels, Coach wallets and bags and any name brand ever thought of in God's kingdom. Why bother to travel to bazaars out of the country when we have our very own souks?

The good news is that yes, they do carry size XXXL in Capri stretch pants in practically all colors of the rainbow. There are as well cotton T-shirts bearing the names Polo and Lacoste for the princely sum of P45. I have actually seen an elegant house in Corinthian Village with furnishings totally upholstered in material from Divisoria. Hey, don't knock it. The textile wasn't any cheapy, cheapy stuff even if the price was below P100 per meter. However, you won't find Chintz, but on the other hand I hear Laura Àshley isn't in any more.

If you're not after adding to your already overflowing closets more pants and shirts, there's the pearl *tiangge* at Virra Mall to warm the coldest heart. I'm told necklaces of gold, grey, pink and bluish pearls are the latest fad. Even Vogue featured our time-honored Muslim traders recently. Neither are pearls the only things you find: there are turquoises so cheap one of the ladies said they must have been wood painted blue. This worried our *balikbayan* friend no end, so she ended up taking them to a jeweler to have them authenticated. Yes, they were turquoise but "very low quality." Considering the price, low grade or not, it was a bargain and pretty to boot.

Aside from turquoises you find amber (or maybe they were *amber-amberan*, as they call the plastic ones), coral, agates, azabache, garnets, amethysts, jade and all kinds of jewelry to match the finery you bought at the Divisoria Mall. At a dinner in Baguio, our hostess wore burgundy-colored pants and shirt from Divi, red beads from Virra Mall and ruby earrings from Burma (her own). Like she herself said, she thought and felt truly elegant from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Leaving Manila and all the low-land *tiangge* behind, we took off one evening for Baguio. The following day (or maybe we did have the decency to wait another day), there we were in the late afternoon browsing at the Mines View Park *tiangge*. (All those woolens are very easy to resist if you shop in the heat of day.) This time we were buying shawls in all colors of the rainbow, again to match the you-know-whats we had earlier acquired at the other *tiangge*. This may have been carrying the color coding to the umpteenth degree which would have had my late husband shaking his head at all this frivolity. So if you have the misfortune of running into me one of these fine days, you may find me wearing a pair of lime-colored pants (Divisoria) topped by a lime-colored cotton blouse (Tutuban) with Virra Mall green jade (?) around my neck and wrist. If I look slightly green around the gills, well...as the Bible says, life is short.

A lot of ladies go shopping at these various places for the sheer pleasure, but there are others who make it a business. You can actually create necklaces of different beads and have them string them up in whatever design you want. Another *balikbayan* friend went around with a Chanel ad of pearl accessories to copy. She may well have been the envy of her circle of friends when she returned home. They would have thought she won the lotto.

One afternoon I actually saw the Lady of the Shoes going from stall to stall with her entourage, happily entertained. I couldn't help thinking of Buchellatti, Cartier and sundry big-time jewelers she had frequented in her hey-day. Shopping being addictive, I presume it's fun, quality notwithstanding.

While it's true that Filipinas can tell you where to shop for the best buys anywhere in the world, it may not be a bad idea if we advertised our different *tiangge* in the same way as the souk in Damascus (presently out of bounds), Cairo (wouldn't advise it either), Istanbul and other famous bazaars. Obviously the street markets of the Orient and the alleys of Hong Kong are also no-nos at the moment. These may be a couple of hundred years older than Virra Mall, but Binondo can't be that far behind and is just as much fun.

A season of gratitude

YOUNG BLOOD

KM Del Rosario

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I AM at peace with myself. To others, to those outside looking in, it would look as if I have no reason to feel that way: I have left my thesis unfinished and I remain unmarried although I am nearing 30. Yet I feel strangely happy. Comforted. Content.

I have read somewhere that one must be grateful for what one has before he can appreciate other good things. I am grateful for the present, and I savor every moment of it.

I am turning 30 in May. I don't feel it, because I don't know what a 30-year old should be feeling like. Sometimes people tell me I don't look it, but I guess they are being kind.

I know this year will be full of magic! It is going to be a turning point for me. I feel like I am on the verge of everything, after walking around in circles for years. I am finally coming to grips with a lot of things: anger, sadness, anxiety, hopes, fears, happy memories, my life purpose, my goals in life. I had lived too much in my mind, too much in the past, and worried over a future that might not even happen. I had been weighed down by ifs, buts and what-ifs, not content with next times or just-do-its. I didn't live in the present.

Winter: I lost my father in 2001, and it devastated the family. I felt it personally. I saw him die in the hospital. I talked to him as they tried to revive him. I got angry at the doctors for being too slow.

To rub salt on my wound, I lost my job a few months later. That same year, I lost touch with a man I had loved forever.

I decided that I needed a break. My head and my heart needed silence. I gave myself a year to heal, not only from the pain of loss, but from the pain of not knowing why I was alive.

So I took a break, still feeling the pain. Sometimes numbness took over. I lived like there was no tomorrow, unthinking, unfeeling. I rested. I slept. I drowned my fears and tears in food.

But fate doesn't keep you in a funk forever. After all that misery, I got back the three most important things in my life: my family, my love and an eternal hope in good things.

Spring: My love came back one chilly December morning to ask me out for movie and lunch. We had been friends for a long time, and I loved him in my heart but he was attached to somebody else. So keeping my feelings in check, and resigned to a lifetime of friendship with him (good thing he wasn't married yet), I said yes to the friendly invitation. He told me he wanted to go with me when I went back to our place. He said he loved me.

I asked about his status, and he told me he still needed to get out of his present relationship. With tears in my eyes, I told him he should come back only when he could be solely mine. I was tired of being a friend to someone I had loved for years.

He came back a month later, happily disengaged from a long-distance relationship that was going nowhere. We have never been apart ever since.

Summer: After living without direction, I woke up one day with a clue to my life purpose: inspiring women. I decided that my year in isolation could also be spent discovering my true purpose. I enrolled in baking and catering classes, took a seminar on coaching, and attended a class on how to publish a book. I bought a big oven, and when I felt sad, I would bake cakes and cookies to sell. I would knead bread dough when I needed to think. I would frost a cake when I needed time out from my sadness.

The pain of losing our father drew the remaining family members together. I had breakfast with mother every day. I spent time with my brothers, eating out, grocery shopping, having weekly meetings where we shared our hopes and dreams. Spending time together gave us a chance to sort out petty grievances and iron out differences.

Forgiveness was happening in our midst, around me, inside me. I found out that it was never too late to forgive anyone or anything. Nothing was big enough not to be forgiven.

Fall: I resolved to enjoy my life and make the most of it. I had gotten depressed after I lost my dad, my work and my love. I knew I also lost the spark in me a while back. Defeats and trials dragged me down, and I gave up momentarily.

I resolved to get back on my feet. I knew bigger things were in store for me. I had to fight the pain and lethargy. After a year devoted to discovering myself, I knew what I had to do in my life.

The third gift I received was hope—hope that bigger, better and brighter things will come. I knew it was my responsibility to myself not to hold back despite the harshness of life at times. I continued to make my affirmations, tried to visualize my dream life, did meditations and prayers, took long walks and did yoga when I remembered. I kept smiling though my heart felt like it was being torn apart. I smiled even as I was humiliated and made to feel insignificant. I prayed more as my bills mounted and my savings declined.

Hope came as a gift. From that year of isolation, I learned the meaning of gratitude. I picked up from where I had left off. I was thankful for getting a new chance at life. I started my own gift company, and accepted some writing and PR work. I baked cakes and made confections to sell. I studied web design and submitted articles on the web. I went back to my unfinished thesis and began writing articles again.

I was able to do all this because my heart kept saying thank you for whatever life shoved my way. I found strength because hope and gratitude was always in me, never failing me, keeping me safe, keeping my faith.

Gratitude doesn't mean being thankful only when good things happen. It means being able to look heavenwards even if people throw stones at you and you feel you are in a big hole with nothing to your name. It is being grateful for past accomplishments, including the mistakes you made, which taught you some lessons. It is expecting good things to come your way, soon, maybe tomorrow, maybe 10 years from now. Gratitude is being able to look at life in its totality and saying things are never better.

Next month I will be 30. I am looking forward to it. Though I have nothing of substance—yet—to give to the world, I know God is working in me as I write, slowly guiding me to where I ought to be. I am in no hurry. All good things will happen in their own time. I have all I need: my gifts, my family, my love and my friends. I also have a hope that refuses to be extinguished. Things are fine, and I really feel it inside my heart. My singing, smiling heart says everything is okay.

Thank you, Universe. I am happy to be alive!

KM Del Rosario, 29, is a creative writer who owns a tiara, dances when she feels like it and bakes edible gifts. She is busy coming up with a seminar for young women and doing some writing work.

Privatization of MWSS a big success

THIS is to correct some facts in the special report datelined Kyoto, Japan, "Water experts discuss big flop," last April 17. I would like to state that the privatization of the water industry is not a big flop since water services have vastly improved.

We at the MWSS see Maynilad as the only failure but not the whole privatization project. This failure could be Maynilad's own doing as the government has granted nearly all its demands.

Many firms have shown interest to invest in lieu of Maynilad. Several provisions in the concession agreement have assured continued water services when problems, such as Maynilad's, arise. Thus, the problems of Maynilad would be confined to the court of law.

The price of tap water is relatively lower today than during pre-privatization time when the MWSS was still running the water services. This is based on the consumer price index—considering the foreign currency losses, capital expenditures, government subsidy of salaries of personnel and others.

To stress the success of privatization, the other half of the concession, being run by Manila Water Company Inc., continues to earn profits. It declared a net income of P553 million for the year 2002.

Also, there are now 9.8 million people who have connections compared to only 7.3 million people prior to privatization, or a 34 percent increase. The water coverage was only 67 percent then and now it is 92 percent, or a 34 percent increase. The daily availability of water also improved from 17 hours to today's 21 hours, or 24 percent increase. Water production also increased by 44 percent, from only 2,800 million liters daily (mld) to the present 4,026 mld.

Even the services extended to the urban poor today under the Water Improvement Project for Depressed Areas were noted with some 127,640 households enjoying water connections after years of living with none.

These figures are only a few among many other successes of privatization. We cannot imagine how some people still perceive the privatization of the water industry as a failure.

—EDUARDO C. SANTOS, chief regulator, MWSS Regulatory Office, Manila

Baseless charges in Tulfo's column

IN YET another one of his baseless and unsubstantiated accusations, Ramon Tulfo in his column on March 12, 2003, claimed that "Macala allows inmates at the National Bilibid Prisons maximum security compound to have cellular phones in their cells. In fact, he sold them those cell phones."

This latest tirade against my person was made to ridicule my order to have former Mayor Rey Yap's cell inspected, which Tulfo said was "just a put-on."

I am filing another libel suit against Tulfo and will continue to do so for as long as he continues to peddle lies against me, much as I don't relish it. It seems that the only recourse of a public official against people of Tulfo's kind are the courts of law, for no matter how they twist the truth, they will always have the last word. It's up to Tulfo to prove his accusations in court where I'm sure he will be proven wrong.

—COL. RICARDO B. MACALA (Ret.), director, Department of Justice Bureau of Corrections, Muntinlupa City

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So clean and bright

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

SOME medical professionals sometimes talk about SARS being "airborne," an unfortunate choice of terms because in Filipino, this translates into "*hangin*," literally "the wind," evoking images of the SARS virus traveling long distances to infect entire communities.

This just isn't the case, as we are seeing in the Philippines. Last Sunday, the Department of Health declared Barangay Vacante in Alcala, Pangasinan, SARS-free.

This was the home village of A.C., the first confirmed local case of SARS. A.C. died last April 14, upon which the DOH placed her entire barangay under quarantine. The two-week observation period ended Sunday and except for four households that were in very close contact with A.C., the entire barangay has now been declared SARS-free.

Remember A.C. also went around Manila, Tarlac and Pampanga, attending a wedding and looking for healers for her sick father, but all her social contacts are uninfected. So far, only one person has been confirmed infected, and this was her father, who was already very sick with cancer. In the next week or so we should know for sure if A.C.'s other close contacts were infected.

But even without waiting for the final outcome of the A.C. case, we just need to look at the more than 4000 SARS cases worldwide. Most of these infections occurred in hospital settings, mainly affecting medical staff and other hospital workers. A cause for concern are the clusters of infection in Hong Kong's housing complexes, especially the 300 or so cases in the Amoy Gardens, which suggest there might be environmental factors at work, for example, poor waste disposal. But scientists still agree the SARS virus cannot travel long distances through the air.

What then do we mean by droplets? This would be material containing the germs, and would be mainly mucus from SARS patients. The droplets are spread when the patient coughs, sneezes or spits, which propels the viruses by as much as a meter. This is why health officials say you need "close contact" with a SARS patient.

A patient with SARS could also pass the virus through the hands. For example, if the patient covers his mouth or nose while coughing or sneezing, the virus would then transfer to the hands, and can then be passed on to other people, either through actual contact, for example through handshakes, or through inanimate objects, which could be anything from elevator buttons to phone handsets. Note that the SARS virus doesn't survive that long outside of the body so it's still close person-to-person contact that's most problematic.

Given all these facts, how does one prevent SARS transmission?

Face masks? Medical scientists believe the masks work more against fear than against bugs. Many face masks being sold, including surgical masks, don't effectively filter out viruses in the first place. To work against the SARS virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) specifies that one has to use respirators with a specification that's N95 or better. The "N95" means that if the mask is properly fitted, it will have a 95 percent filter efficiency against particles, down to 3 microns in diameter. (The SARS virus is from 1 to 2 microns.)

These respirators are actually recommended more for patients with SARS, to prevent them from spreading the virus. Health workers coming in close contact with the patients, and medical laboratory workers handling materials that may have SARS, are also advised to use the respirators. For other people, especially when you're outdoors, the masks just aren't useful against the SARS virus.

How about sterilization and disinfection? Sterilization destroys all types of germs, but this is possible only by using laboratory autoclaving, involving high temperatures applied under steam pressure. This is done only in hospitals and medical laboratories.

For non-medical settings, disinfection is the next best option. Disinfection kills most microorganisms, usually on inanimate surfaces or objects that may have germs, e.g., table tops, floors, phones, escalator railings. There are several chemical disinfectants but the most common one goes by, the fancy name of sodium hypochlorite, but is better known as bleach or chlorox. Sodium hypochlorite comes in different strengths so you should just follow the instructions on the product labels for the proper dilution.

SARS gives health educators a chance to get back to the basics in personal and environmental hygiene. This should be as good a time as any to try to convince people to curb the "freedom of spit," although admittedly, spitting may not be as infectious as sneezing and coughing.

Ultimately though, the most dramatically effective way of preventing many diseases, including SARS, is plain handwashing. I talked to Dr. Consorcia Lim-Quizon, OIC of the DOH's National Epidemiology Center, and she says one study after another has shown the effectiveness of handwashing for preventing many diseases, including SARS.

I checked with the latest edition of the WHO's Laboratory Biosafety Manual, and there, in between discussions about fancy autoclaving equipment and chemical germicides, was this simple advice: "In most situations, thorough washing of hands with ordinary soap and water is sufficient to decontaminate them...Hands should be thoroughly lathered with soap, using friction, for at least 10 s (seconds), rinsed in clean water and dried using a clean paper or cloth towel (if available, warm-air hand-dryers are also recommended)."

If you don't have access to water, WHO has this advice: "alcohol-based hand-rubs should be used to decontaminate lightly soiled hands." Note that if you use alcohol itself, it should have a 70 percent concentration to be effective.

To reiterate, this is the best time to get people back to health basics: curbing the freedom of spit, covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, and hand-washing. Get the kids started on that last habit, accompanied by that old song: "I have two hands, the left and the right. Hold them up high, so clean and bright..." And SARS-free.

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Nokor to South: Stay off dispute

SEOUL—North Korea told South Korea on Monday that it should not meddle in a standoff over the communist North's suspected nuclear weapons, calling it a dispute between Pyongyang and Washington.

In a second day of Cabinet-level talks in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, South Korean delegates again demanded that the North abandon any nuclear weapons development, citing a 1992 inter-Korean agreement to keep the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free.

Northern negotiators stonewalled the nuclear discussion.

"The Northern side reiterated that the nuclear issue is a matter between the North and the United States," said a statement from the South Korean government. "But they said they wanted to resolve the matter peacefully."

The talks, which began Sunday, are scheduled to end Tuesday.

Seoul officials said North Korean delegates had not confirmed a US claim that during talks in Beijing last week they told an American envoy that they may test, sell or use atomic weapons, depending on Washington's actions.

Instead, they reiterated that the North made a "new, bold" proposal to the United States during the Beijing talks, but did not elaborate, South Korean spokesperson Shin Eun-sang said.

US officials did not reveal the North's proposal, but South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, quoting unidentified diplomatic sources, reported Monday that North Korea proposed to give up its nuclear programs in return for a nonaggression treaty and normalization of "political and economic relations" with the United States.

The administration of US President George W. Bush has ruled out such a treaty, but US officials have said some form of written security guarantee could be possible. North Korea says it fears being invaded by the United States following the Iraq war.

During Sunday's talks, North Korea called for "united efforts of all the Koreans" to "reject the unilateral strong-arm action of foreign forces . . . and prevent the danger of war," said the North's official news agency, KCNA.

Such remarks reflect the North's longstanding policy of driving a wedge between the South and its main ally, the United States.

The North tried to shift the focus of the talks to linking cross-border railways and other economic projects with South Korea that are part of a reconciliation process that grew out of a historic North-South summit in June 2000.

During a visit Sunday to an unidentified "frontline unit," North Korean leader Kim Jong-il was satisfied that his soldiers were ready to repulse "any surprise attack of the enemy at one stroke," and gave "guidelines in further increasing the unit's combat capability," KCNA said.

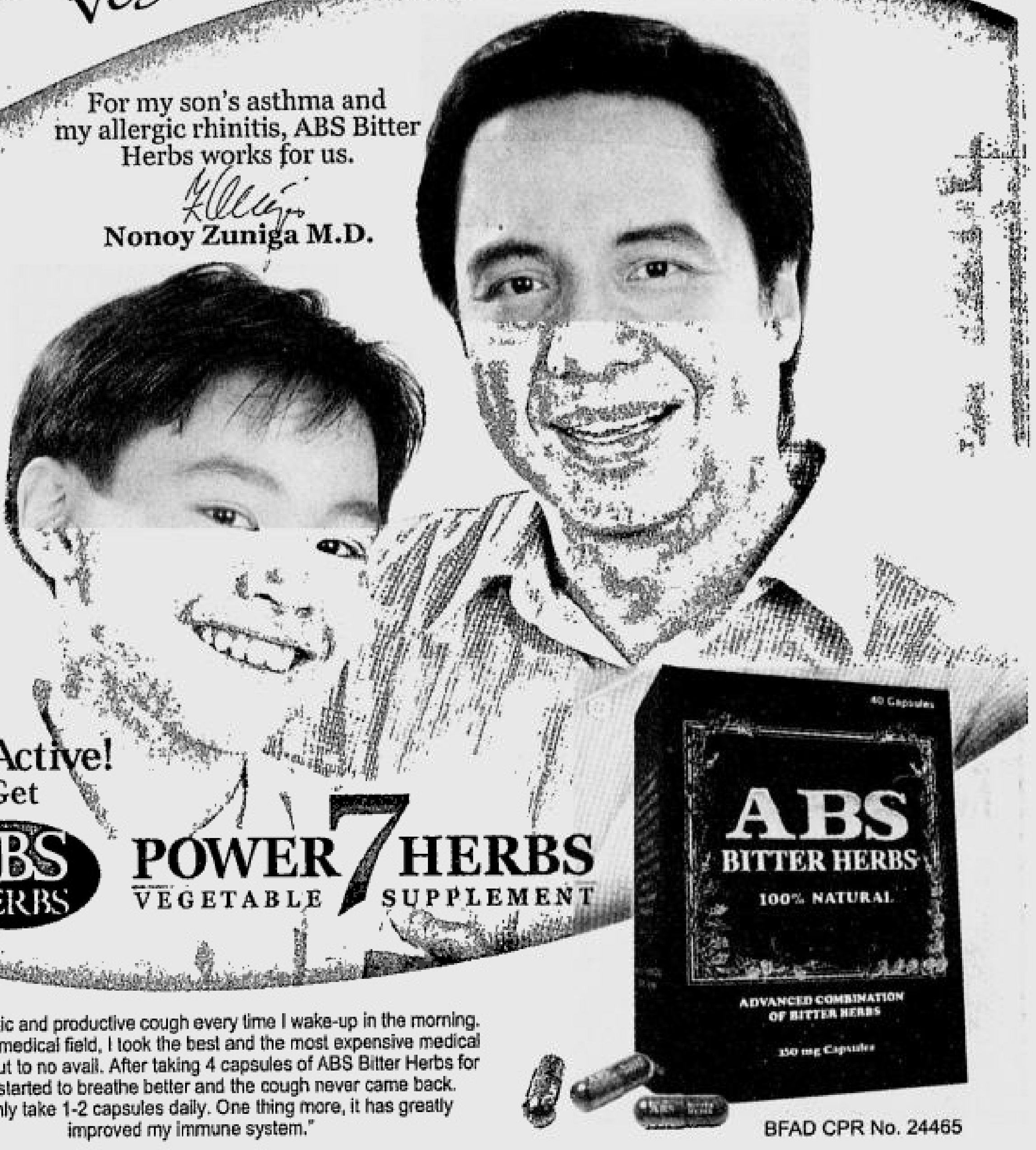
It said North Korean soldiers were determined to "become human bombs in safeguarding the headquarters of the revolution and wipe out any invaders."

Washington believes North Korea has one or two atomic bombs and may be trying to make more. North Korea has indicated that it would never abandon its nuclear programs unless Washington signs a nonaggression treaty.

During the Beijing talks, US officials said North Korea also claimed that it had reprocessed 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods—a key step in producing nuclear weapons that could yield several more bombs within months. Some speculate that Pyongyang may be bluffing.

The White House has said it will confer with allies about possibly seeking UN sanctions against North Korea. Pyongyang says it would consider international sanctions a "declaration of war."

Washington has said it wants the "verifiable and irreversible" elimination of the North's nuclear weapons programs. *AP*



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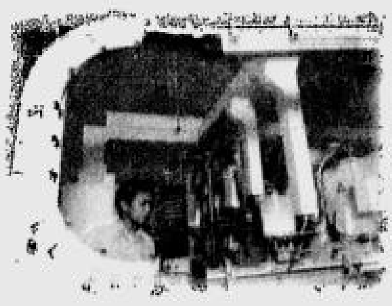

US troops again fail to find lethal weapons

BAIJI, Iraq—American troops once again failed to find Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction after performing further tests on a metal drum that initial readings suggested contained nerve agents and mustard gas.

The tests came as Lt. Gen. Hossam Mohammed Amin—No. 49 on the US list of the 55 most-wanted figures from the regime of Saddam Hussein, the six of clubs in the deck of fugitive playing cards—was taken into custody in Baghdad on Sunday.

Amin surrendered to US soldiers and was taken to the international airport for questioning. Also known as Hossem Mohammed Amin al-Yasin, he was among the key figures in Saddam's weapons programs. He would be expected to have detailed knowledge of any illegal armaments and where they might be found, if they exist.

A dozen 55-gallon drums were found propped up with gravel in an open field near the northern Iraqi town of Baiji. Preliminary tests performed at the scene indicated one drum might contain the nerve agent cyclosarin and a blister agent that could be mustard gas, US troops said.

More tests were being conducted. By design, initial test procedures favor positive readings, erring on the side of caution to protect soldiers.

The New York Times quoted Capt. Ryan Cutchin of Mobile Exploitation Team Bravo—one of the specialist teams deployed in Iraq—as saying that further testing by his unit had shown that the barrel's contents were not chemical weapons. He also said that initial suspicions that two vehicles at the site were mobile chemical laboratories had proved wrong.

There was no immediate comment from the US Central Command in Qatar about the report, posted on the Times website on Sunday.

There have been numerous false reports that coalition forces have turned up chemical or biological weapons. Since the discovery, Central Command has been measured in its response.

"There are many sites that we look into every day, and when we have confirmed positive results we will provide that information," Central Command spokesperson Capt. Stewart Upton said earlier Sunday. "We just want to be very cautious that when we go with the information, that when we release nuclear, biological, or chemical information, that we're accurate."

Mustard gas burns skin, eyes and lungs, while exposure to high amounts cyclosarin may lead to loss of muscle control, twitching, paralysis, unconsciousness, convulsions, coma, and death within minutes.

Lt. Col. Ted Martin of the 10th Cavalry Regiment said soldiers went to the site near Baiji on Friday midnight after being alerted by US special forces teams who became suspicions of the site because of the presence of surface-to-air missiles guarding the area.

Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles ringed the 3.88 sq-km-field Sunday evening, using night vision equipment to watch for intruders. Troops had permission to shoot to kill if anyone entered the area, which was near the Tigris River about a kilometer outside Baiji.

Sgt. Maj. David List of the regiment's 1st Squadron said the field appeared to be a storage site for large missiles. "This whole country is a big ammo dump," List said. *AP*

Pentagon chief thanks troops for historic success in Iraq

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar—The US-led war in Iraq was a historic success that would influence military spending and doctrine for decades, US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Monday.

The military, he said, used "an unprecedented combination of power, precision, speed, flexibility, and, I would add, compassion."

"Baghdad was liberated in less than a month, possibly the fastest march on a capital in modern military history," Rumsfeld said.

He spoke to hundreds of cheering, desert camouflage-clad troops in a warehouse at the command headquarters for the Iraq campaign. Though the troops in Qatar were involved in command and logistics —not direct combat—they played a key role, the secretary said.

"You protected our country from a gathering danger and liberated the Iraqi people," Rumsfeld said. Later, he added: "You liberated a country, but how you did it will help transform the way we defend our country in the 21st century."

Rumsfeld is visiting the Gulf region this week to thank the troops and discuss the future American military presence with leaders of allied nations. He was scheduled to meet with Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar's leader, later Monday.

US Gen. Tommy Franks, the war's commander, said Sunday he wanted to continue using the high-tech headquarters here that was completed just before the Iraq war. US officials say they're considering moving an American air command center from Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia —a move that could bring the center to the Al Udeid air base near here, which has the necessary facilities and equipment. *AP*

SLAM ISA PEACE REL
SLAM REFUSE TERR
الأسلام دين السلام
الإسلام يرفض الإرهاب

IRAQI Muslim Shiites demonstrate in Baghdad on April 28 in front of a US tank and lines of barbed wires outside the Palestine Hotel. Protestors, led by dozens of religious leaders from the powerful Hawza Shiite school in the holy city of Naja, chanted "We want a new national conference." AFP

Main Shiite group boycotts US-led talks in Iraq

LONDON—A representative of a key Iraqi Shiite group said Monday that his movement would boycott US-led talks on forming a new government in Iraq.

Hamid al-Bayati said the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq opposed American involvement in choosing an administration to replace the Saddam Hussein regime.

The "all-faction" conference in Baghdad, the second in a series of talks expected to extend well into May, is presided over by the US civil administrator for Iraq, retired Gen. Jay Garner.

"We are not attending because it is organized by the Americans, because it is an attempt to select an Iraqi administration under Gen. Jay Garner," the London-based Al-Bayati told British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

"We would like to see Iraqis organize and call their own meetings and select an Iraqi independent government," he said.

The Iran-based Supreme Council shunned a first round of talks on Iraq's political future on April 15 in the southern city of Ur. It had indicated it was ready to participate in the second round starting Monday, but al-Bayati quashed hopes of any involvement by the Shiite group.

"If they do not want us to have an independent government, then we would rather not be part of an administration under American rule. That would be a matter of principle," he said.

"We cannot be part of an American administration or American rule, and our people would not expect that from us, and we would not want to be isolated from our people." *AP*

Indonesia police see more terror bombings

JAKARTA—The world's largest Muslim nation could be hit by more terror attacks like the weekend bombing that wounded 11 at Jakarta's main airport, police warned Monday.

Police have questioned 10 witnesses, but made no arrests in Sunday's blast that ripped through a busy domestic passenger terminal.

No one has claimed responsibility for the pipe bomb blast that detectives say was probably the work of an Islamic extremist group blamed for previous attacks, including the Oct. 12 nightclub bombings on Bali that killed 202 people, mostly foreign vacationers.

Police said it is also possible that separatists from the restive province of Aceh might have been responsible—an accusation denied by the rebels.

Australia and the Philippines offered to help in the investigation. President Macapagal-Arroyo said she would discuss possible cooperation with Indonesian officials on the sidelines of a summit of Southeast Asian leaders on SARS in Bangkok on Tuesday.

Security has been beefed up at airports. Authorities at Jakarta's Sukarno Hatta International Airport strengthened police patrols and advised workers to look out for suspicious packages.

A black bag found at the airport's international terminal Monday was turned over to police bomb squad. It remained unclear what was inside.

Authorities barred cars from parking in front of the terminal at Bali's airport. Dozens of officers patrolled its grounds. *AP*

Russ capsule docks at int'l space station

MOSCOW—American astronaut Edward Lu, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Malenchenko and the three-man crew on the international space station greeted each other with big hugs Monday after the Soyuz TMA-2 capsule carrying the US-Russian duo successfully docked with the ISS.

The docking took place at 9:56 a.m. Moscow time about 400 km above Russian territory. The US-Russian crew already aboard the ISS opened the hatch and then Lu and Malenchenko squeezed through the opening and poured into the space station.

Lu and Malenchenko are replacing the trio of US astronauts Kenneth Bowersox and Donald Pettit who along with Russian cosmonaut Nikolai Budarin were stuck on the station after the Columbia Shuttle disaster on Feb. 1.

The Russian Soyuz became the only ship capable of carrying crews to and from the space outpost, giving it a vital role in keeping the station manned. The Soyuz trip was put together in record time.

The US-Russian space team gave a thumbs up in a videolink established shortly after the new crew entered the ISS. "We're very, very proud today at the work of our international team," Bowersox said.

Asked how he felt to be back on the international space station, Malenchenko said: "It has become so big and beautiful . . . We are very glad to be here, very glad to see our friends. Thanks to everyone for the opportunities given to us."

Back on Earth, Lu's mother, Snowlily, was on hand for the docking at Mission Control outside Moscow. "I am just so happy and proud to see everything work out so well," she said.

Snowlily Lu, the astronaut's brother, Rick, and his fiancee, Christine Romero, stood and leaned forward while watching the screen during the docking. They applauded and cheered when the vessels established a connection. Downstairs from the observation area, flight controllers also applauded.

"This is amazing... It gives me a lot of relief to see that they're up there," Romero said. "Everyone is proud not just for what Ed is doing, but for Nasa and the international space station and for the space program as a whole, especially after the Columbia." *AP*

CHOCOLATE SCULPTURE
Patissier Daisuke Nogami holds a handful of white chocolate he used to create the life-size chocolate sculpture of the Venus of Milo on display at Food Art Museum, in Tokyo on April 28. Chefs have recreated famous pieces of art using sweets and food ingredients at the Akasaka Prince Hotel. REUTERS

Want to live 100 years? Eat Bulgarian yoghurt

MOMCHILOVTSI, Bulgaria—Lactobacillus bulgaricus sounds like a nasty infectious disease but the organism that curdles milk may be the reason Maria Shopova recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

Unaware that she may owe her longevity to the friendly bacterium, Maria grins, unveiling her two remaining teeth, and explains: "It's luck given by God."

The lively centenarian, who kept a cow until she was 80, has lived on dairy products—yoghurt in particular—most of her life in the picturesque mountain village of Momchilovtsi in southern Bulgaria.

The Balkan country proudly claims to have invented yoghurt and given the world the secret to a long life but its own consumption has steadily declined since the collapse of communism.

Yoghurt is slowly disappearing from the nation's table with annual consumption falling from 40 kg per capita, the world's highest in the 1980s, to 22 kg in 2001.

The drop has paralleled a decline in agricultural production and incomes over the past 13 years as ex-communist Bulgaria charts a difficult path toward a market economy, industry officials said.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the number of centenarians has also fallen to 187 in 2001 out of Bulgaria's population of eight million, or less than a one in every thousand, statistics show.

Around 100 years earlier, the figure was four in every thousand.

Now found at supermarkets around the world, it wasn't until the early 1900s that Russian scientist Ilya Mechnikov, a 1908 Nobel Prize winner, linked yoghurt with longevity. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Menem, Peronist rival in runoff

BUENOS AIRES—Former President Carlos Menem finished first in presidential elections but failed to win an outright victory in his comeback bid, setting up a runoff vote to decide who will lead this recession-battered nation. The flashy former leader who governed Argentina from 1989 to 1999 will face Nestor Kirchner, a rival from the ruling Peronist Party, in a second round of voting on May 18. The runoff between the two top vote-getters will be the first in Argentine history. *AP*

2 Palestinian militants seized

NABLUS, West Bank—Israeli troops stormed into the West Bank city of Nablus on Monday and arrested the local leaders of two armed militant groups which claimed a suicide bombing in Israel last week, Palestinian and Israeli security sources said. Amid intense exchanges of fire in the northern city, troops arrested Amir Zokan, 27, the local head of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction. They also seized Alam Kaabi, 27, head of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades the armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Both groups laid claim to the suicide bombing at a train station in Kfar Saba last Thursday in which one Israeli was killed and a dozen injured. *AFP*

Cambodia cops save 140 monkeys

PHNOM PENH—Cambodian police seized 205 monkeys stuffed in sacks as they were being smuggled abroad to be eaten as a delicacy, but 60 had already suffocated to death, officials said Monday. One monkey had given birth inside its sack when the shipment was found in a pickup truck on Saturday in Kampong Chhnang province, police said. "It was miserable," said provincial police chief Touch Naroth, contacted by telephone. He said four people were arrested from the truck, which was bound for the capital, Phnom Penh. From there, the animals were to be smuggled to an unidentified foreign country where they would have ended up in restaurants serving raw monkey brain as a delicacy, he said. *AP*

New Paraguay president

ASUNCION—Nicanor Duarte, a former education minister who promised to battle corruption and restore the country's battered dignity, has won Paraguay's presidential election, extending the Colorado Party's 56-year hold on power. With 92 percent of votes counted, Duarte earned 37.2 percent of the vote, election officials announced after voting Sunday. At a victory celebration, Duarte, 46, a journalist and former Cabinet minister, challenged his rivals to join him in a "war against poverty, corruption and impunity." *AFP*

1st round of peace talks in Nepal

KATMANDU—Maoist militants demanded that a new constitution be drawn up and hundreds of political prisoners released Sunday in the first round of much-delayed talks aimed at ending a seven-year insurgency in this Himalayan nation. Six government negotiators and five rebel representatives met for five hours in a heavily guarded hotel in the Nepalese capital. The government side was led by Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal, and the militants were led by their second-in-command, Baburam Bhattarai. *AP*

NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Room 201, Bonuan Apartelle
10 Happy Glen Loop, Baguio City
Tel. No. (074)443-9255
Fax No. (074)443-8971
E-mail: inq_baguio@inquirer.com.ph

SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
23 Aurora St., Old Albay District
Legazpi City
Tel. No. (052) 820-8402
Fax No. (052) 820-1274
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph
Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
18-15 Escario St., Cebu City
Tel. Nos. (032) 233-0346/233-0349
Fax No. (032) 232-9938
E-mail: pdivis@skyinet.net

MINDANAO BUREAU
FEP Printing Corp. Bldg.
Ma-a Road, Davao City
Tel. No. (082)244-1770 to 71
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OIC team due to check on MNLF men

COTABATO CITY—The Organization of the Islamic Conference team that brokered the peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front will be in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to check the implementation of the 1996 pact.

MNLF spokesperson Alfatah Abubakar said the OIC delegates will arrive here in two groups-from Manila today to check on the condition of MNLF members in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur.

The other group is scheduled to visit the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi until May 1.

The three-day OIC visit in the ARMM had been confirmed by police regional director, Chief Supt. Acmad Omar, who said the visitors will have the chance to meet former MNLF rebels who have been integrated into the police force.

Omar said after a short courtesy call to top regional officials led by Gov. Parouk Hussin at the ARMM complex here, the group will proceed to the regional police headquarters at Camp Gen. Pendatun in Parang, Maguindanao.

The OIC "fact-finding mission," according to Abubakar, had been rescheduled several times for unknown reasons.

The group, composed of "technical people," is an "advanced party" that would pave the way for the coming here of OIC foreign ministers or their representatives.

"The next batch of OIC members will arrive in May, but no definite date has been set (as yet)," said Abubakar, who is also regional secretary of the Department of Science and Technology.

He said the MNLF had prepared a position paper for the visiting OIC members but preferred that the contents be left undisclosed until it reached the hands of the OIC delegates.

The delegates, Abubakar said, will be briefed by the government and the MNLF on the progress of the accord.

Some MNLF commanders complained of the government's "half-baked implementation" of the agreement, prompting a number of their men to return to the hills and others to join bandit groups.

Al Sangki, a former MNLF commander, said some of their comrades were hard-up after surrendering because of the government's failure to provide them livelihood or income-generating projects.

"We are happy that OIC representatives are coming over so they may know the real score of the peace agreement as far as some members of the MNLF are concerned," Sangki said.

THE WAR between government troopers and Moro rebels continues despite the 1996 peace pact with the MNLF and ongoing negotiations to strike a similar deal with the MILF. In Pikit, North Cotabato, the fighting leaves bullet marks on the walls of a school. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/PDI MINDANAO

Nur Misuari, considered the founder and original chair of the MNLF who signed the peace agreement, listed development projects but failed to carry them out.

The government also abolished the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development that was supposed to oversee the implementation of the projects.

Among the projects that came to naught, which Misuari considered "dividends of the peace agreement," were the proposed $120-million sugar central in Maguindanao, a $45-million medical center in Zamboanga City by the Islamic Development Bank, 6,000 housing units in Sulu, and a $367 million cement factory in Palawan courtesy of Indonesian and Canadian business groups.

Under the agreement, the government is mandated to absorb into the police and military some 1,500 MNLF members, apart from the 1,105 others who will form the regional security force. *Charlie C. Señase and Rosa-May V. de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

5 die in collision

CABANATUAN CITY—Five people were killed while four others were injured after a Cagayan-bound bus hit two pedicabs and a truck along the Maharlika Highway in San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija on Wednesday. Senior Insp. Ramon Gamboa, San Leonardo police chief, identified two of the fatalities as Jinjin Monares and Asucena Casaclao, passengers of the Auto Bus Liner bound for Tuguegarao City. Another passenger and two pedicab drivers that the bus hit were killed in the accident that happened around 4:30 a.m. Gamboa said the bus first hit the pedicabs that were traveling without taillights. The bus then collided with a southbound cargo truck. ***Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

4 killed in shootout

CABANATUAN CITY—Four people were killed in separate shootings in Guimba and Sta. Rosa in Nueva Ecija on Thursday. In Guimba, a woman and her daughter were shot and killed during a heated argument with a man at noon Thursday. Police identified the victims as Lolita Mendoza, 47, and her daughter, Lorna, 22, of Barangay Maturanoc, Guimba. Reports said the suspect, Joselito Barroga, 48, surrendered to the police after the shooting. In Sta. Rosa, a lone gunman shot and killed two men at dawn Thursday. Supt. Marlon Bigcang, Sta. Rosa police chief, identified the victims as Louie de Guzman, 41, and Bayani San Vicente, 48. Bigcang said the gunman approached the two men, who just came from a cockfight in Barangay Soledad. The suspect, without provocation, shot and killed them. ***Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Dentist slain

SAN PASCUAL, Batangas—An unidentified gunman shot and killed a dentist at 9 p.m., April 24, in his home in Barangay Poblacion. Dr. Carmelo Delgado, 53, a dentistry professor at the Lyceum of Batangas, was fixing his van in his garage when shot in the face by the suspect who escaped with another companion on a blue motorcycle. Delgado, who was active in the anti-drug abuse campaign, was rushed to the Batangas Regional Hospital in Batangas City but was pronounced dead on arrival. Witnesses in the victim's neighborhood said the suspect had a mole on the left side of the nose, was of medium build and had curly hair. ***Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

No dump site

SILANG, Cavite—Mayor Ruben Maglangsakay said the the town is buying five garbage trucks but their problem is where to throw all the garbage. "This problem cannot be solved by the government alone. All people who want their surroundings clean must cooperate and initiate garbage segregation," he said. The town's trash is temporarily dumped in a nearby town, Madlangsakay said. Without a town dump, the local government has no choice but to burn the huge volume of uncollected garbage during weekends. ***Fausto Tatad Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

Parting of ways

TRECE MARTIRES CITY—Cavite Gov. Irineo Maliksi and his close ally, Vice-Gov. Jonvic Remulla, are parting ways. Remulla is running for governor in the 2004 elections but nothing is final yet, he said on Thursday. "I have plans to run for governor although I am still studying other options before making any decision," Remulla said. Maliksi, on the other hand, said his political machinery is in top shape to battle with Remulla. "I will beat him hands down," he said. ***Fausto Tatad Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

'SARS' campaign

CALAPAN CITY—Inspired by the SARS-threat, a creative campaign was launched by the Calapan Youth Ministry during Holy Week: bring to confession your severe acute recurring sins. It caught the attention of many churchgoers and lightened up the Lenten mood in the city. ***Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

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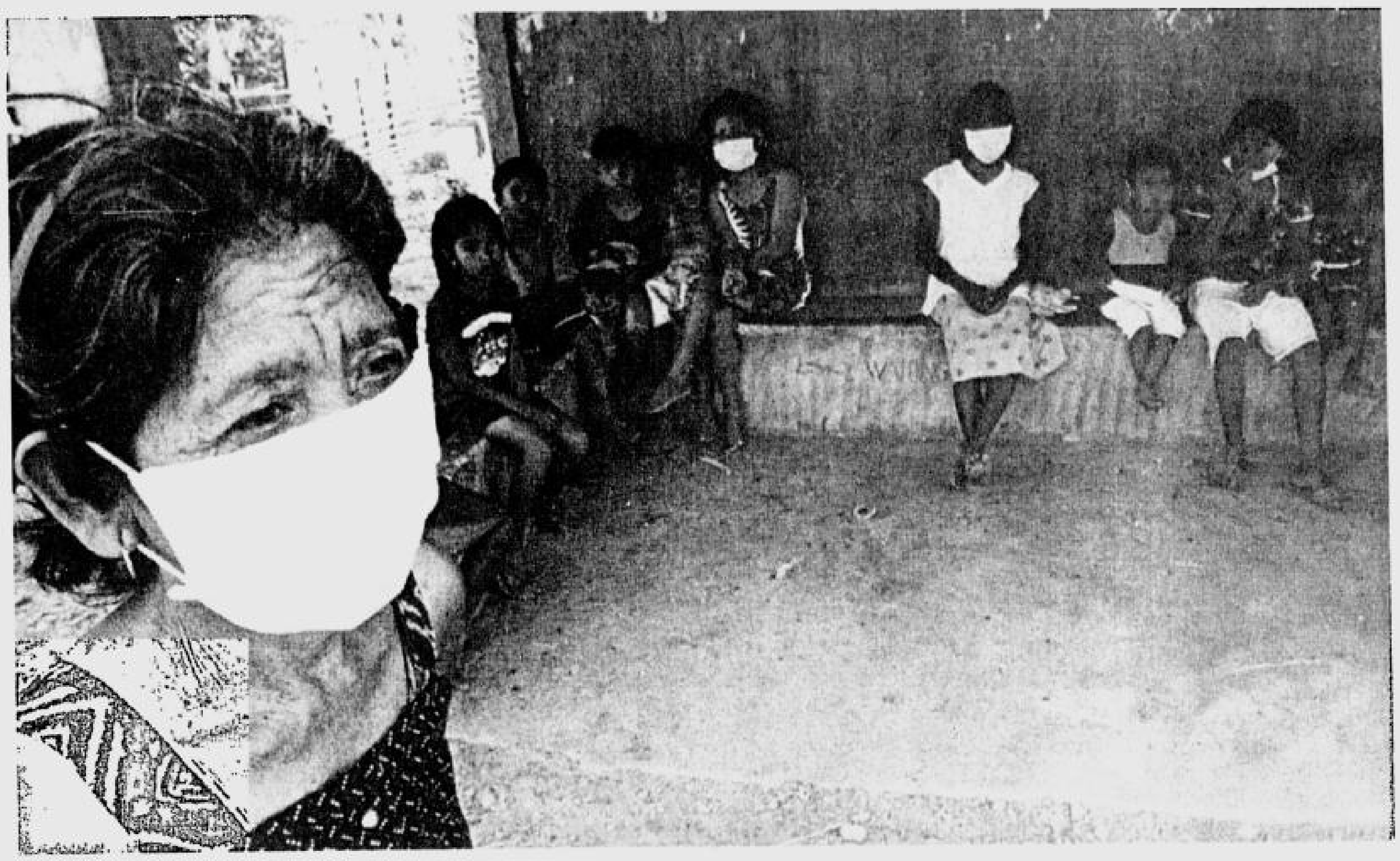
SARS FALLOUT

Villagers in Pangasinan town become outcasts

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau



THE WORRIED look in the eyes of this woman from Vacante village in Alcala, Pangasinan captures the ordeal that village residents are now going through following reports that Adela Catalon, a nurse attendant, returned home from Canada and died of SARS in the village. PDI PHOTO/VAL HANDUMON

ALCALA, Pangasinan—As if having two family members dying only a week apart was not enough, relatives of Adela Catalon, whom health authorities said was a victim of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), have to endure discrimination from their townmates.

"The way we are treated by other people is annoying, even insulting. It's as if we are lepers that a group of people would part in the middle when we see us coming," said a 22-year-old resident of Barangay Vacante.

The resident lives outside the three zones that the Department of Health has ordered isolated.

Though some of them understood why they must be quarantined in their village, they admitted that they were hurt when people, whom they used to deal with regularly, refused to even talk or go near them now.

"We feel like outcasts in our own land," a 67-year-old man, who lived in the village all his life, lamented.

The deaths of Catalon and her father Mauricio, with whom she had close contact, changed the quiet lives of the about 700 residents of the farming village of Vacante.

Homecoming

Catalon, a 46-year-old nursing attendant who worked in Canada, went home on April 5 but died of what health officials said was SARS on April 14.

No other people are allowed to enter the village except the medical teams of the DOH and some policemen assigned to patrol the area.

Emotions run high among the residents who have to deal with the fear of having been contaminated with the deadly virus and the discrimination they have to suffer.

They resent surgical mask-wearing reporters who come to the village to interview them, though some of them quietly endure the discrimination.

A television reporter had to explain why she had to wear a surgical mask to Catalon's brother when she interviewed him.

In the town market, vendors would ask a customer if he or she comes from the village.

"If we answered yes, the vendors would turn away and say they can't attend to us," a 68-year-old aunt of Catalon complained.

A niece, a 22-year-old mother who sells beauty products, said when she went to the town proper to buy her supplies, some people shouted at her, telling her not to come near them.

But some residents said they understood what the health authorities are doing.

Basilia Samoy, a barangay health worker and Catalon's aunt, said some residents know the dangers of SARS and cooperate with the health personnel.

Bad treatment

Samoy said she, too, was a victim of bad treatment from residents of other villages but would just let it pass.

Samoy and four other barangay health workers help the DOH medical team in taking the body temperatures of residents.

"There are mixed emotions, really," Catalon's nephew, an overseas contract worker in Saudi Arabia, said.

"While they (residents) somehow understood that health officials wanted to help us, the bad reports and the treatment (they get) from other people anger them," he said.

While the INQUIRER was in the village, a nephew of Catalon, who seemingly could no longer cope with the tension of being confined in his house, went out and cursed at the medical team stationed at the village center.

The man shouted at the medical team and told them to go away. A barangay health worker later pacified him.

OFW's return rings SARS alarm bells in Albay

LEGAZPI CITY—Another case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) scare brought alarm among residents and health workers of Albay.

Health authorities here are investigating a report about an overseas Filipino worker from Germany who stopped over at Hong Kong before going home to Tabaco City, allegedly with symptoms of possible SARS.

Dr. Veronica Madulid, Albay provincial health officer, disclosed the case during the flag-raising ceremony of provincial government employees yesterday, but she refused to identify the suspected SARS patient pending results of tests made on Sunday.

According to Madulid, a 56-year-old OFW from Germany, who just arrived on Saturday, exhibited fever, one of the symptoms of SARS.

The OFW, she said, arrived in Tabaco City together with her niece and a German national.

She and her niece worked as nurses in a hospital in Germany.

Madulid said only the 56-year-old woman registered fever when the three arrived in Tabaco City.

X-ray

She said X-ray tests were already submitted to the Department of Health in Manila to determine if the case is indeed SARS.

The two former OFWs and the German national, according to Madulid, were temporary put under quarantine in their house while waiting for the final report coming from DOH-Manila.

The INQUIRER learned that the family of the possible SARS carrier even had an excursion in a beach in Albay, causing fear among residents of a possible SARS outbreak, in case the result of their tests come out positive.

The SARS rumors in Bicol forced local government units in different places here to take steps to prevent the spread of the dreaded disease.

While a SARS task force in Legazpi has been established just for SARS monitoring, in Tabaco City, even barangay health officers were asked to monitor returning OFWs—especially from SARS infected countries—and immediately report them to health authorities.

The Albay Provincial Health Office, according to Madulid, already instructed all municipal and city health offices to strictly monitor OFWs entering the province to make sure no SARS case enters the province undetected.

No monitor

In Puerto Princesa City the provincial board has raised concerns about SARS because, it said, in some areas of the province, the entry of people is not monitored, particularly in some island municipalities.

And to make sure that the province is ready against the SARS, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan on Tuesday asked provincial health officer Antonio Palanca to provide updates on the province's preparations.

Palanca readily admitted that his office has "limited resources and manpower" for their information campaign and that they "need the help of the people in the community."

He, however, said they have already taken necessary measures "to minimize, if not prevent the entry" of the dreaded disease. *Joyce M. Mejillano and Geraldford P. Ticke, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Crops, farms suffer ₱7M in drought losses

By Vicente S. Labro
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Nearly 6,000 hectares of farm land in the island-province of Biliran suffered damages due to the El Niño phenomenon, which destroyed crops worth P7,262,070.

According to the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Biliran, provincial agriculturist Quinciano Casinillo reported to Biliran Gov. Rogelio Espina that rice farms suffered damages due to the long drought.

Casinillo said the El Niño phenomenon wrought damages on a total of 5,564.50 ha of land and brought losses to a total of 326 rice farmers in the province.

Authorities estimated that the losses suffered by farmers due to the drought would reach P2,828,420 as far as rice plants in their vegetative stages are concerned.

Damage to rice plants in their reproductive stage was computed at P3,956,750.

The total amount of the damage was placed at P6,785,170.

The drought also wrought damages on corn farms in the province.

According to provincial data, 31 ha of corn farms suffered damages while 125 farmers suffered losses due to the drought.

Corn plants in their vegetative stages suffered damages worth P310,000 according to the agriculture office.

Corn plants in their seeding stages suffered P5,000 in damages.

The agriculture office said corn farms suffered a total of P369,400 in damages.

At least 34 ha of banana plantations also suffered damages, bringing losses to at least 135 farmers. The amount of the damages was estimated at P107,500.

The PIA in Biliran reported that the agriculture office was also anticipating that livestock production in the province, particularly the production of cows and carabaos, would be adversely affected by the drought due to the scarcity of pasture grass.

Gov. Espina and the provincial agriculturist's office and some concerned agencies have been assisting farmers who were adversely affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

Slain Mindoro activists tagged martyrs in rites

QUIRINO, Ilocos Sur—Slain human rights activists Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy were remembered here as "martyrs" during the celebration of the Cordillera Day last week.

The heroism of Marcellana and Gumanoy, who were abducted and killed in Oriental Mindoro last week, was cited by about 3,000 delegates to the celebration in Barangay Lamag here on April 24, the 23rd death anniversary of Cordillera tribe leader Macli-ing Dulag.

In 1980, Dulag was gunned down by Army soldiers in his house in Tinglayan, Kalinga, for leading the opposition against the construction of the Chico Dam, one of the infamous projects of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

"Just like us, Ka Eddie and Ka Eden also worked with the indigenous peoples, like the Mangyans in Mindoro. Our celebration is not only a tribute to the Cordillera martyrs, but also to Filipinos who fight for human rights and justice," said Joan Carling, chair of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), organizer of the celebration.

Songs and prayers paid tribute to the life of Dulag, chief of the Butbut tribe in Tinglayan, Kalinga, and other Cordillerans who led the fight in defending their ancestral lands and pushing for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights.

The participants also offered a minute of silence for Marcellana and Gumanoy.

"The struggle for human rights and the demand for justice should continue and the political repression against our people must stop," Carling said.

Marcellana, secretary general of the Alyansa sa Pagsusulong ng Karapatang Pantao in Southern Tagalog (Karapatan-ST), and Gumanoy, chair of the Kasapian ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan (Kasama-TK), were murdered last April 21 by suspected members of anti-communist vigilantes.

But human rights activists are claiming that the military was involved in the murders.

Earlier, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and Karapatan claimed that Col. Jovito Palparan, commander of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade, had a hand in the killing of Marcellana and Gumanoy.

Palparan denied the allegations, saying these were baseless and unfounded and said communist rebels should be investigated also.

Army officials relieved Palparan and assigned him to another detachment to pave the way for an investigation by the National Bureau of Investigation of the murders.

Carling said Marcellana and Gumanoy had worked closely with Cordillera activists on human rights advocacy projects.

"What happened to Ka Eden and Ka Eddie is part of the struggle to fight for human rights. But we should be headstrong in calling (on authorities) to give justice to their deaths," said Arvin Arnobit, Northern Luzon coordinator of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

Participants lighted torches and performed the *pattong* (ensemble of gongs) and *tayaw* (community dance) to celebrate the heroism of the martyrs honored during the Cordillera Day. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

HUMAN rights activists Josephine Gantenas and Jay Fabellio narrate the slaying of colleagues Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy during an interview with reporters in Bansud, Oriental Mindoro.
PDI PHOTO/JOAN BONDOC

Gozun says DENR to reorganize execs, personnel in May

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is implementing a nationwide reorganization in May, said Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun on Thursday.

"We are now in the final stages of choosing the regional technical directors and regional executive directors (of the DENR)," she said.

Gozun was in Negros Occidental on Thursday for the closing rites of the 12th Philippine Biodiversity Symposium of the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Philippines at Mambukal Resort in Murcia town, about 16 kilometers east of here.

She said the DENR's challenge now is how to make people understand the need to protect the environment.

"We cannot expect them to support us in this effort if they don't really understand the value of biodiversity conservation," said Gozun.

"We have to show how biodiversity loss will impact on ordinary people," she said. "For as long we are not able to make that connection very clear this will be a mere esoteric issue that the people have no sense of oneness with."

Gozun said she agreed with Bukidnon Rep. Nerius Acosta that the Philippines is on the brink of an ecological crisis.

11 people dead as bus, jeep collide on Quezon highway

LUCENA CITY—At least 11 people were confirmed dead while a still undetermined number of passengers were injured yesterday in the second major road accident in six months along the Quirino Highway in Tagkawayan, Quezon, about 278 kilometers south of Manila.

A police report said a passenger bus, Raymond Bus Liner with license plate DVN-557 and with body number 4208 from Naga City bound for Cubao, and a passenger jeep with license plate AEL-422 from Dagupan City and heading to Bula, Camarines Sur, collided with each other in Barangay San Vicente at around 10:30 a.m. yesterday.

PO1 Reinerio Recio, Tagkawayan police station desk officer, identified seven of the fatalities as Ernesto Talar, Jesusito Grecia, Gil Valero Jr., Antonio Tayer, Eulogio Follero, Edgar Tayer and Romeo Baldoza, the jeepney driver.

Four others, including a female victim, remained unidentified as of late yesterday.

All were passengers of the jeep that was carrying 17 passengers.

The six other jeep passengers who were injured were treated at the hospital.

Recio said the bodies of the fatalities were brought to the Crystal Funeral Homes in Tagkawayan, Poblacion.

The driver of the ill-fated bus was identified as Marvin Parafina Decena.

He suffered slight injuries and is now confined at the Tagkawayan District Hospital, Recio reported.

"We were able to establish their identities through their personal belongings. We're still working on how to identify the other victims," he told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said police investigation of the accident was still ongoing to determine who was responsible for the fatal collision.

Recio said the bus carried 25 passengers based on the report of the bus conductor.

"But we've only accounted for eleven of them. Maybe, some of the passengers who only suffered slight injuries did not bother to file their complaints and just continued with their travel," the policeman said.

He described the site of the accident as going downhill if one is bound for Manila.

In November last year, more than 33 people were killed and six were injured when a bus bound for Bicol plunged into a ravine along the Quirino Highway, a kilometer away from where the bus and jeep collided. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

DOH says no SARS but stigma remains

From page A1

cluding the 26 people who will be put under extended isolation, had fever as of Saturday afternoon.

Hurting

Barangay chair Delilah Tamundong said the people of her barangay were hurting.

Since day one, Maybocognons have heard unkind remarks and some have suffered humiliation. "Our people are losing their jobs and their dignity," she lamented.

Tamundong said she had to cancel her business in Borongan, the province's capital town, upon learning that a local bank refused to transact business with her barangay treasurer. Some were either told to wash their hands first or were shooed away at convenience stores.

Worse, goods from the barangay and even the residents are denied rides on public transport. An old woman waited for a day but no vehicle took on her sack of rice. Some students were not able to enroll for summer classes in Borongan for the same reason.

Maybocog is Maydolong's biggest barangay. People earn their living through farming, fishing and "balut" making.

No one had expected the barangay to draw media attention and to carry the stigma, which have wreaked havoc on the people's psyche and livelihood.

"We blame the media for this. Instead of informing what we should do to check the disease they have turned our barangay into a hot zone," Tamundong said.

Mayor Daniel Baldono expressed the same disgust.

Baldono said people should not jump to conclusions without basis. "This attitude cripples our economy and relationships," he said.

In Borongan, government officials and heads of the Provincial Health Office are meeting regularly to allay fears over the possible spread of the disease.

Discrimination.

Even with the lifting of the quarantine, the lives of residents of Barangay Vacante are hardly back to normal and they still have to contend with discrimination from other people.

"Even if we are now free to go to other villages, people still refuse to talk to us or come near us. We have been stigmatized by being village mates of SARS victims," said Vacante resident Florence Baldomero.

Mayor Juanito Collado appealed to reporters, who have been following up the story, to help remove the stigma attached not only to the residents of Vacante but to the entire town.

Collado said jeepney drivers, who ply the Rosales-Bayambang route and pass through Alcala refuse to ferry residents of the town. Collado has to send a jeepney to fetch them.

A student from Alcala, who was training in a national government office in Dagupan City, was reportedly advised not to report to the office "until further notice."

Reports gathered by the INQUIRER also showed that some employees of a national government agency in Dagupan refused to transact business with Alcala residents.

The checkpoints set up by the police in the four major entry and exit points of Barangay Vacante were scheduled to be removed on Sunday afternoon.

Police officials said none of the policemen assigned to the village would be subjected to quarantine procedures because they had no contact with either Adela or Mauricio Catalon.

Baldomero belied reports that many villagers had defied the quarantine order by leaving the village through the agricultural fields.

Enough food

The residents, she said, had enough food given to them by the provincial and town governments, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Pangasinan Rep. Mark Cojuango, San Miguel Corp. and other donors.

Still, the livelihood of Vacante residents has been affected as dealers refuse to buy their agricultural produce, specifically corn and tobacco.

Even dealers of various products supplying Vacante's sari sari (variety) stores avoid the village.

A storeowner in the village's Zone IV, which is not covered by the quarantine order, complained that he has nothing to sell anymore.

The owner cannot buy his supplies from stores in the town proper because store owners there do not want to sell to him or to residents of Vacante.

Fish and vegetable vendors from other towns, who usually sell their products everyday in the village, have stopped coming.

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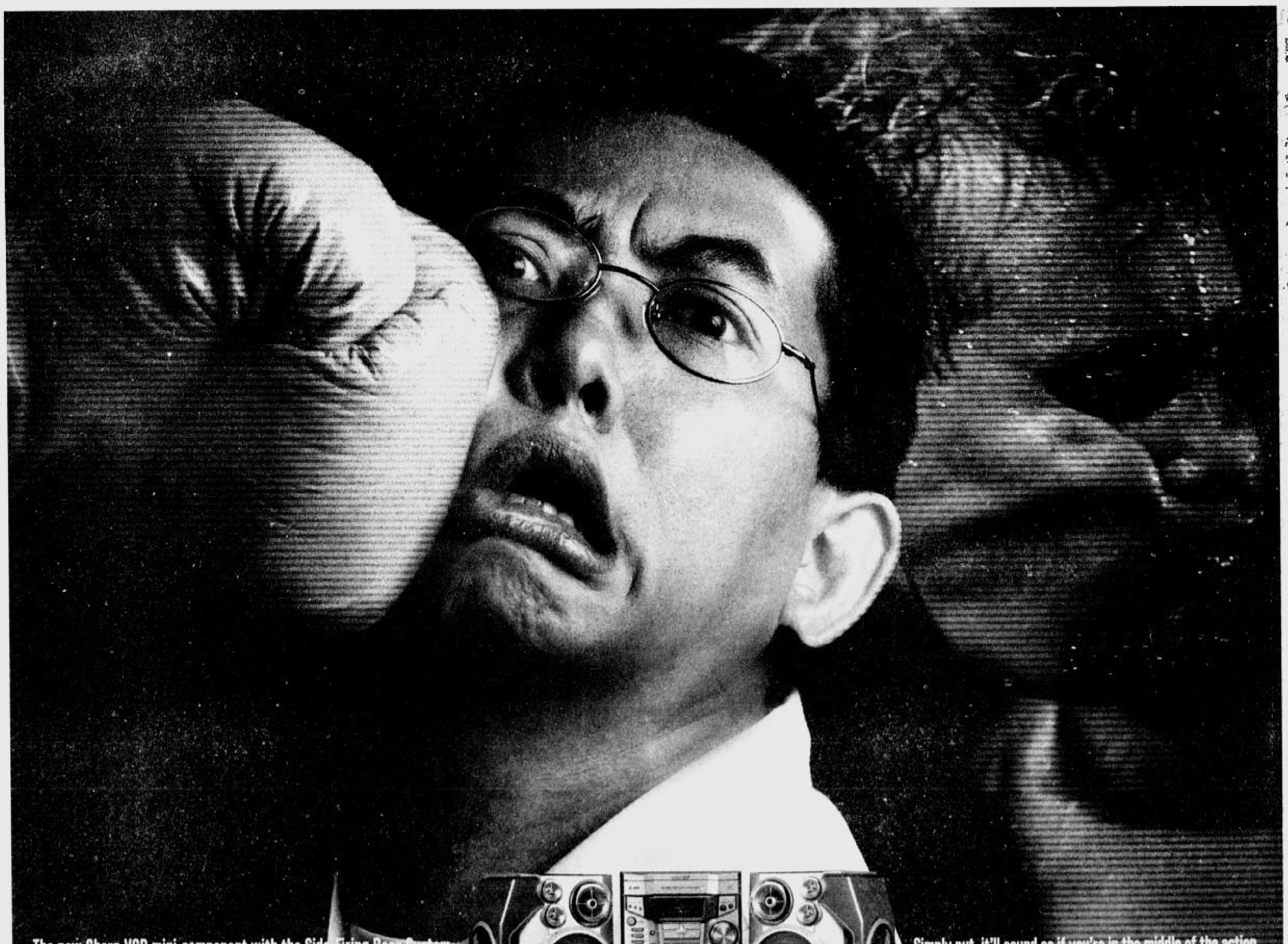

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JP has fully recovered

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

PALO, Leyte—JP, the overseas worker mistakenly identified as the country's fourth SARS case, has fully recovered and will be discharged today, local health officials said.

Mila Bachu-Bacus, director for Eastern Visayas of the Department of Health, said JP will be allowed to go home today after she had fully recovered from viral infection.

"She will be released any time (Tuesday). Until (Monday) morning, she did not develop any fever. She is ambulatory," Bacus told a news conference here.

Bacus said JP's body temperature remained normal at 36.8. Her chest X-ray examinations were also negative for pneumonia.

JP's husband also did not exhibit any symptoms for SARS, she added.

With this, Bacus said Eastern Visayas was now back to being a "SARS-free region."

Presidential Adviser for Eastern Visayas Victor Domingo, who joined in the press briefing, immediately called President Macapagal-Arroyo to inform her about the impending release of the patient.

Bacus said they would no longer wait for the results on the blood samples taken from JP, which are being tested at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM). *With reports from Carla P. Gomez, Romy G. Amarado and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Dayrit: We're down to three SARS cases

From page A1

ble active parenchymal lung infiltrates. The heart shadow is not enlarged."

"As a result of that, we are declassifying (her) as a SARS case," Dayrit said.

He theorized that technicians from the private sector could have made a "wet reading" of the X-ray finding and falsely concluded that JP was suffering from "bacterial pneumonia."

Dayrit said such errors occurred in other SARS-infected countries.

"We err on the side of safety," he said, admitting though that the error "caused a lot of panic" and placed JP's family in a lot of discomfort.

Coronavirus

Dr. Maria Consorcia Quizon, director of the National Epidemiology Center, said the RITM and the SLH were now "capable" of testing for the coronavirus.

"This week, we can already confirm the presence of the coronavirus here," she said, adding that the two centers can do it in hours.

Previously, specimens from suspected SARS patients were sent to Japan for testing.

Airport officials announced that all passengers, even those coming from SARS-free countries, would be screened and those with fever would be prevented from boarding the aircraft while they undergo further tests.

A Seoul-bound Philippine Airlines flight was forced to return to Manila last week after one passenger had the chills, officials said.

BETTER to be late in this world than to be early in the next. Strict implementation of security and quarantine measures delays the entry of passengers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. ROGER MARGALLO

Yesterday, a 7-year-old South Korean girl was whisked to the RITM after she developed high fever while aboard the plane. The girl was travelling with her parents for a beach holiday in the Philippines.

Officials of the World Health Organization and the DOH are concerned about reports that some private hospitals—fearful of losing clients—have started to turn away suspected SARS patients.

WHO country representative Dr. Jean Marc Olive asked private hospitals to effect a closer cooperation to strengthen their capacity to attend to SARS cases should a full-blown outbreak hit town.

"What is important is for the private sector (hospitals) to get together to address the SARS problem," Olive told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

To date, only the Asian Hospital has a negative pressure room to tackle SARS and only the Makati Medical Center has announced moves of converting several rooms into isolation rooms.

The issue of hospitals fearful of being stigmatized came to the fore yesterday when Dayrit admitted that a private hospital that treated JP in Eastern Samar had attempted to "hide" her X-ray results.

The results had led the DOH to wrongly classify JP as the country's fourth SARS case.

New case?

Another Filipino domestic helper died on Sunday of a still unknown ailment after spending less than 24 hours in a hospital in Hong Kong.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the death could have been caused by SARS.

"Any death becomes SARS suspect . . . It's possible she may have had symptoms of SARS," Sto. Tomas said in a press briefing.

The woman, identified only as JC, was admitted to the Queen Mary Hospital only the other day.

But Dayrit called up the INQUIRER last night to clarify that the woman had not been infected with the SARS virus.

Quoting Hong Kong Consul General Vicky Bataclan, Dayrit said the 27-year-old maid could have died of a ruptured appendicitis.

"It's not a SARS case," Dayrit said, adding that the worker was brought to the hospital on April 24 and was given antibiotics, but died on the 27th.

"It could have been an appendicitis that was not managed properly resulting in full-blown infection. It was an intra-abdominal infection, probably a ruptured appendicitis," Dayrit said.

CY, the Filipino who is married to a Chinese and lives at the quarantined Amoy Gardens, is in "very serious condition" at the United Christian Hospital, according to Sto. Tomas.

Dayrit also called attention to the possible outbreak of dengue during the rainy season, admitting that the health department may have difficulty addressing both SARS and dengue outbreaks.

Dayrit asked people to dispose of accumulated water in their backyards with the coming of the rainy season. "The next epidemic is dengue," he said.

"We cannot have two epidemics breaking out simultaneously," he said, adding that dengue has infected 10 persons in Sultan Kudarat, killing one. *With reports from AFP, Blanche S. Rivera*

Vietnam offers hope SARS can be licked

From page A1

every day."

Vietnam's success in containing SARS , however, stood out optimistically amid the otherwise grim news. No new SARS cases have been reported in Vietnam since April 8.

"Vietnam has been able to show the world that there is hope that SARS can be contained," Pascale Brudon, WHO representative in Vietnam, said at a news conference in Hanoi.

Fast and tough action is credited with Vietnam's success. In contrast, China—regarded as the birthplace of the disease—has been criticized for not acting for months after the first outbreak erupted in its south last November.

The latest deaths brought China's national toll to 139. Officials said 3,106 people have been confirmed infected, including 203 new cases on Monday.

In Beijing, there were three new deaths. So far 59 people have died and 1,199 confirmed infected in the city where police were stopping thousands of vehicles and checking drivers and passengers for SARS symptoms.

The capital has about 7,600 people in quarantine and has kept its schools and nightlife shut down as it builds a 1,000-bed SARS isolation camp on its northern outskirts.

Hong Kong reported 14 new infections—the lowest total yet for any 24-hour period since Hong Kong began releasing daily SARS statistics in March.

Indonesia

Indonesia said it suspected a Taiwanese businessman had died of SARS, in what would be the country's first fatality from the flu-like virus.

Taiwan began enforcement of a 10-day quarantine in state-provided quarters for visitors arriving from SARS-infected countries. Incoming citizens have to stay at home for the same period. With planes all but empty, airlines canceled some flights.

In Malaysia, officials sealed off a hospital with almost 600 workers and patients in Kuching on Borneo island because they feared it might be contaminated with SARS.

None of the Kuching cases had been classified as probable SARS, but "for now nobody comes in and nobody gets out of the hospital," said Deputy Health Director General Ismail Merican.

In Singapore, where 22 have died from SARS, hundreds of people disinfected and fumigated open air markets and food stalls.

The massive weeklong cleanup will temporarily close 134 food centers and 80 markets islandwide, the National Environmental Agency said.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which has spread to more than 30 countries via air travelers, prompted a rare global alert from WHO. Tourism in Asia has dropped significantly.

But WHO on Monday lifted all travel advisories for Vietnam, which had five deaths from SARS after the virus spread in February through Hanoi's only international hospital.

Sixty-three people contracted the virus, including several doctors and nurses. Hanoi's French Hospital was cordoned off on March 11, a move credited with slowing the rate of infection and keeping SARS from spreading beyond its doors.

China cover-up

In contrast to Vietnam, China was widely criticized for failing to respond earlier to the disease crisis.

China's best-known dissident said in an article published Monday in the International Herald Tribune that the SARS cover-up in China had to have been the work of the country's highest leaders.

"Hiding information about something as dangerous as SARS could only have been sanctioned at the highest levels—the Politburo and Secretariat," said Wei Jingsheng, referring to the top echelons of the Chinese Communist Party.

"No mere minister of health or Beijing mayor would have the courage or power to hide this kind of information. Their recent dismissal was the usual story: Lower officials are scapegoats for high-level irresponsibility."

The health minister and Beijing's mayor were sacked last week for their part in hiding the extent of SARS in China.

The US-based Wei compared China's SARS crisis to the former Soviet Union's Chernobyl disaster—the nuclear accident which the Soviet regime initially covered up.

It is now considered one of the final blunders of a closed totalitarian system that ultimately led to its demise. In the wake of that disaster, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was compelled to use the policy of "glasnost" or openness as a means to recover legitimacy, but opening a closed system spelled its demise, Wei said.

In the SARS crisis, the Chinese regime also faces a fragile legitimacy as revealed by rumors within China that SARS may have emanated from the country's biological weapons research facilities, Wei said.

Most Chinese also believe the communist regime is guilty of concealing information about an infectious disease that threatens the entire country.

But unlike Chernobyl, Wei said, Western countries were not criticizing China. Outside pressure was, in large part, what made Chernobyl a turning point that led to the Soviet collapse.

"By contrast, Western leaders today need Beijing's support in their own internal dispute over Iraq and in dealing with North Korea," Wei said.

"More than a shame, it would be a historic mistake to pass up this opportunity to make China's leaders accountable to their own people and to the world at large. The virus next time is sure to be more virulent."

Wei, one of China's key dissidents, spent 18 years in prison before being sent into exile. Since 1997, he has lived in the United States. *Reports by AP and AFP*

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GMA: Be prepared for worst scenario

From page A1

nationwide.

"The use of the term 'national emergency' may have been inappropriate but the fact is we are facing a serious national concern," Bunye said. "This administration is determined to use its resources to check this menace."

Bunye later told the INQUIRER the phrase was used as a descriptive, not a legal, term.

The President noted that the official number of SARS cases had been lowered from four to three, and that Barangay Vacante in Alcala, Pangasinan, where two confirmed SARS deaths occurred, had shown no new SARS transmittal cases while under quarantine.

"So if we're talking of a national emergency, that should be in Beijing, Guangdong, Hong Kong, Toronto," she said.

Not illegal

Even though Malacañang retracted the "national emergency" statement, various agencies fell in line.

Justice Undersecretary Merceditas N. Gutierrez told reporters the imposition of a "national emergency" was constitutional and backed by existing laws.

"It is a declared policy of the state to promote the health of the people. (So the declaration is) for the general welfare of the people," said Gutierrez.

She said that as head of state, President Macapgal-Arroyo was expected to "protect the health and the life of every individual in the country."

"As of now, I think there are sufficient laws to adopt measures to prevent the spread of SARS and even to prevent the (entry) of passengers suspected of carrying the disease," Gutierrez said.

She claimed that existing laws even empowered the President to bar the entry of aircraft or sea vessels that carry contagious diseases.

"Actually there are two laws involved," Gutierrez disclosed. "The law on quarantine and the sanitation code."

The Philippine National Police also said it was bracing itself to perform such tasks as setting up checkpoints and curtailing the movement of people in SARS-infected areas.

"This is harder because the enemy in terrorism is defined. In SARS, it's not. You won't know if the next guy who coughs has SARS. It's even more difficult than the equivalent of the Iraq war," said PNP Deputy Director General Virtus Gil.

Gil emphasized that in cases of SARS infection in a community, the policemen's job would be limited to cordoning off an area.

"Like what happened in Alcala, we just cordoned off the area. Don't let anybody in, don't let anybody out. That will only be the role of the police and the military," he said.

"We will not be arresting people. We will not be bringing them to the hospitals. We will not be guarding the hospitals. That's the role of the DOH (Department of Health); that's not ours."

The Department of Trade and Industry also said it would crack down on unscrupulous traders who have hoarded and profited excessively from the sale of basic SARS prevention goods such as vitamin C supplements, rubbing alcohol and surgical masks.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II has deployed the DTI price monitoring team nationwide to check price and supply levels of anti-SARS medicine and tools and to apprehend businessmen found to have engaged in profiteering.

Legislative action

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina yesterday urged Congress to pass a law that would enable authorities to enforce strict quarantine regulations and sanctions to fight the spread of SARS.

He said a new law was needed to amend RA 123 or the Quarantine Act to address the problem on how government would deal with persons or goods who arrive here from a SARS-infected country and develop the flu-like illness eventually.

"We need a law that would support home confinement even if the person doesn't exhibit SARS symptoms upon arrival here," Lina told reporters.

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. filed Senate Bill No. 2551 seeking to amend RA 123 by providing additional powers and functions to the Bureau of Quarantine and prescribing penalties to violations.

But Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said local governments need not wait for Congress to act on the quarantine measures.

Pimentel said that LGUs possessed "general welfare" powers under the Local Government Code which allow them to "do anything that is necessary to protect and enhance and safeguard the health of the people."

"The problem with enacting a law now is that it will take time before the law is enacted, you will probably have more serious cases of SARS already," Pimentel told reporters. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, TJ Burgonio, Christine O. Avendano and Gil Cabacungan*

'Fight vs SARS like war on terror'

By Alcuin Papa

BANGKOK, Thailand (via PLDT)—A Malacañang official yesterday compared the government's fight against the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome virus to the war on terrorism.

Speaking with reporters on board a Philippine Airlines flight to this city, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the same counter-terrorism measures adopted by the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces against terror attacks will also be used to combat the dreaded outbreak.

Golez itemized the measures as "strengthening intelligence, hardening targets, consequence management and incidence management in case of an actual act of terrorism."

"We must do the same thing here. In the case of SARS, people will have to gather information on what SARS is all about. We have to be very proactive in getting information on possible suspects. We cannot just wait for people to come and report that there are actual cases in this area."

Golez also said the whole police and military establishment will have to be mobilized to contain the disease. "We have to go out and look for them (possible victims). The entire PNP, the entire local government will be mobilized here because we don't know when the next SARS suspect will be."

As for "target hardening," Golez explained that the government will have to tell people how they can strengthen their immunity, (adjust their) lifestyle, (adopt to a) quarantine and control the movement of the people."

The National Security Adviser is part of the advance party of President Macapagal-Arroyo to today's Asean SARS Summit here. The ten Asean heads of state, with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao are expected to present a unified front against the disease that has already killed 317 people, most of them in Asia.

During the one-day summit, the President is expected to propose the creation of an Asean Health Emergency Fund that can be used by the member countries to counter SARS.

Active role

Golez also said local officials should take a more active role in the fight against SARS. "They must be involved. First, they are in contact with their communities. Second, they are also in charge of their health officials down to the barangay levels. The actual initial reports and caring for the patients initially is something they can effectively oversee. Even determining whether something has already reached calamity proportions, they can do that at the local level," he said.

He explained that the Philippine delegation will closely look at the measures being adopted by other Asean countries, particularly Vietnam and Singapore. According to WHO statistics, no new SARS case has been reported in Vietnam since April 8. "They have instituted tough measures to control the flow of patients to and from hospitals. It was discovered that hospitals have a major role in the spreading of SARS. And that is something we can study." On the other hand, Singapore has adopted draconian measures against SARS, including isolation of whole communities and the monitoring of people in quarantine using government cameras.

At the Department of Foreign Affairs, Sec. Blas Ople said the summit will also touch on the coordination of efforts and harmonization of anti-SARS procedures to prevent further "diplomatic fissures" between countries, particularly between Asean members.

"Other than a harmonization and coordination of what are now non-uniform preventive and corrective measures, the Philippines can be expected to propose a mechanism for the setting up of an Asean SARS fund," Ople said.

"The fund ... will be used for further research on the causes and symptoms of the disease, as well as to launch a region-wide information campaign on the nature of the disease and its prevention," he added. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

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Oil firms urge court to stop depot closure

By Jerome Aning

THE TOP three petroleum companies in the country have asked the Manila Regional Trial Court to declare as void an ordinance shutting down the Pandacan oil depot.

Shell, Caltex and Petron said the closure of the facility could jeopardize their operations and trigger fuel price increases and supply shortages that would wreak havoc on the economy.

They asked the court to issue a temporary restraining order against Manila Mayor Lito Atienza to prevent him from enforcing City Ordinance No. 8027, which converted the depot site from an industrial zone into a commercial zone.

Caltex is also seeking P22 million from the city government representing actual and nominal damages and litigation expenses.

A memorandum of agreement signed by the oil firms and Atienza allowed the continued operation of the depot until Wednesday, April 30, despite the ordinance.

Under the MOU, the oil firms agreed to scale down operations by as much as 40 percent.

Councilors interviewed by the INQUIRER over the weekend said they are not inclined to renew the oil depot's license to operate because the oil companies were too slow in complying with the terms in the MOU.

The oil firms said they need more time to scale down operations. But the councilors said that if this would be granted, this proves that the oil firms really do not intend to leave Pandacan.

In their separate petitions, Shell, Caltex and Petron said that the cost of relocating the depot would be prohibitive, estimating it at about P20 billion.

The oil firms also want the court to require City Hall to allow them to operate while their petition is being heard, and be given the regular, unconditional permits to operate until the end of the year.

Barangay 835 chair Felix Majabague, the only one among 43 barangay chairs in Pandacan to oppose the retention of the depot, urged the Council to begin formulating the implementing rules and guidelines for the phaseout of the depot.

"They sho ld uphold the ordinance and not enter into another deal with the oil firms," he said.

SUMMER PLUNGE
Children jump into a piece of Manila Bay in Malabon to cool off, ignoring the disease they might catch from the polluted water.
JOAN BONDOC

It still wants to raise water rates

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE WATER company whose water supply allegedly downed several residents of a Las Piñas subdivision with typhoid fever early this month has petitioned the National Water Resources Board for a P57 increase in basic charges.

BF Waterworks, the main water supplier of BF Resort Subdivision, has a pending petition with the NWRD, which had been filed as early as October 2002, according to Robert Campos, the firm's accounting supervisor.

Campos yesterday said that the new rate would cover the firm's increase in operational expenses brought about by adjustments in electricity charges and dollar exchange rate last year.

In the petition, BF Waterworks asked to increase the base monthly rate to P145 from P88, or P14.50 from P8.80 per cubic meter.

Campos said the last increase came in 1998.

"Our concerns are legitimate," he told the Inquirer. "We don't apply for a rate increase simply because we want to. We do it when the need arises."

But the residents said the recent outbreak of typhoid fever in their subdivision because of contaminated water should convince the NWRB not to grant the water firm's petition for a rate adjustment.

They paid, but got no jobs at all

WHEN looking for a job, jobseekers should also be on the lookout for fake recruiters.

This was one lesson 13 young jobseekers learned last Sunday after they were allegedly duped by Edwin dela Cruz.

The victims accused Dela Cruz, 25, of charging each of them P200 placement fee for non-existent jobs with a non-existent publication.

Honeylheene Pagalaran, 23, one of the victims, told police that Dela Cruz, whom they have known for a long time, had told the jobseekers that he is an editor of the Industrial Philippine Journal.

She said that on separate occasions, Dela Cruz had promised the victims jobs in the publication for a placement fee of P200.

Pagalaran said that last Sunday, Dela Cruz had brought his recruits to the Philippine Stock Exchange on Ayala Avenue in Makati. But they learned from Joemarie Antonio, a security guard at the Exchange, that there was no such publication office in the building.

With the guard's help, the victims hauled off Dela Cruz to the Makati Police and filed a complaint against him.

Jamie Alarcon

Look ...

From page A20

saw in other countries where there had been SARS outbreaks, the virus appears to be more active in dirty places.

"That is why I ask every Filipino especially every barangay *tanod* to make it a personal responsibility to respond to this challenge," she said.

The President also said that barangay *tanods* can help in "contact tracing," or the determination of the identities of people who came into contact with probable SARS carriers.

Perez's return rumored

From page A20

tary Leandro Mendoza who would replace Interior Secretary Joey Lina.

Lina is said to be being considered to replace Fernando as DPWH secretary, or as the Lakas party's campaign manager.

Perez was transportation secretary during the Ramos administration.

In several radio interviews yesterday, presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye was asked point blank about Perez's supposed return.

He sidestepped comment on Perez and just brushed off talks about a Cabinet rigodon as speculation.

"Well as far as Secretary (Lina) is concerned, the President has said in a meeting with the Liga ng Barangay that she has no plan to reassign Lina to another department.

"So that so-called rigodon I believe, is just speculation at this time," Bunye told state-run Radyo ng Bayan.

Perez resigned last Jan. 2 after failing to shake off deposed Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez's allegations that the secretary extorted $2 million from him.

Ms Macapagal made Perez go on a 30-day leave on Nov. 26, 2002, a day after Jimenez came out with his allegations. But she did not reinstate him on Dec. 27, 2002, the end of the forced leave.

National emergency edict needed on SARS

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

NO MATTER what the so-called human rights activists say, President Macapagal-Arroyo is justified in using all the resources of government in preventing the spread of the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus.

The President should not be distracted by criticisms from her usual critics and even those who say that her declaration of a national emergency to fight SARS violated the Constitution.

People are dying by the hundreds in Hong Kong, China and Canada. And God forbid, soon people might be dying by the thousands if the modern-day scourge is not contained.

* * *

And here in the Philippines, GMA's critics are invoking the Constitution to lambaste her for declaring a state of national emergency to prevent the spread of SARS. At least two persons have died in Pangasinan because of SARS and another probable SARS victim is confined in a government hospital in Tacloban City.

If the government doesn't take draconian measures now, SARS might spread to other parts of the country.

Shall we wait for SARS to go on a rampage before we ask our government to take drastic measures?

* * *

GMA's critics say that under the Constitution, only Congress may declare a state of national emergency and grant extraordinary powers to the President for a limited period of time.

Why should we wait for Congress make the declaration when concrete action is needed now? Congress will surely be bogged down in debates over whether to declare a national emergency given the penchant of our lawmakers for grandstanding.

Let the President declare a national emergency and have Congress approve it later.

* * *

Everybody would be made aware about the grave danger facing the whole population in the face of SARS as a result of the national emergency declaration.

The President has appointed Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit as SARS czar to coordinate all efforts to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

Dayrit is empowered to call on the police and the military to help confine SARS in areas already affected.

* * *

Had the national emergency been declared earlier, the stand-off in Tacloban City over a probable SARS victim would not have taken place.

Tacloban City Mayor Alfred Romualdez tried to prevent the probable SARS victim, a woman identified only as "JP," who is from Samar, from entering his city.

Romualdez said he was just protecting his constituents from being infected. He was prevailed upon by his cousin, former Health Secretary Alberto Romualdez to allow JP to be taken to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center in the city.

* * *

You can't blame Romualdez for acting the way he did.

"I would have done the same thing if I were in his place," said a Metro Manila mayor.

The welfare of the majority should take priority over that of an individual, said the mayor who didn't want to be identified.

In fighting SARS, the Constitution should be set aside to contain the modern-day "Black Plague" that decimated Europe in the Middle Ages.

* * *

It's a good thing Bayani Fernando has realized that he could not hold two very critical positions at the same time.

He gave up his position as secretary of public works and highways and decided to retain the position of chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

Only his bootlickers would have told Fernando, "*kaya-kayang mo 'yan* (You can successfully hold both positions)."

But his former subordinates at the DPWH told a different story. "*Hindi pumapasok si* Bayani Fernando *sa kanyang opisina. Masyado niyang inaatupag ang kanyang trabaho sa* MMDA (He's not been coming to the office. He concentrates on his work at the MMDA)," a top DPWH official told me before Fernando resigned as public works chief.

Metro Manilans, those not affected by his strict campaign against sidewalk vendors and squatters, rejoice over Fernando's decision to concentrate on making the metropolis a better place to live in.

* * *

A contingent of the Special Action Force (SAF) inside the vast Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) complex has become a problem to officials at the former US military base.

SAF is the Philippine National Police's counterpart of the Army's Special Forces. Because of their commando training, SAF members are as disciplined as Special Forces soldiers.

But instead of helping maintain order inside the SBMA complex, SAF members have become a problem.

* * *

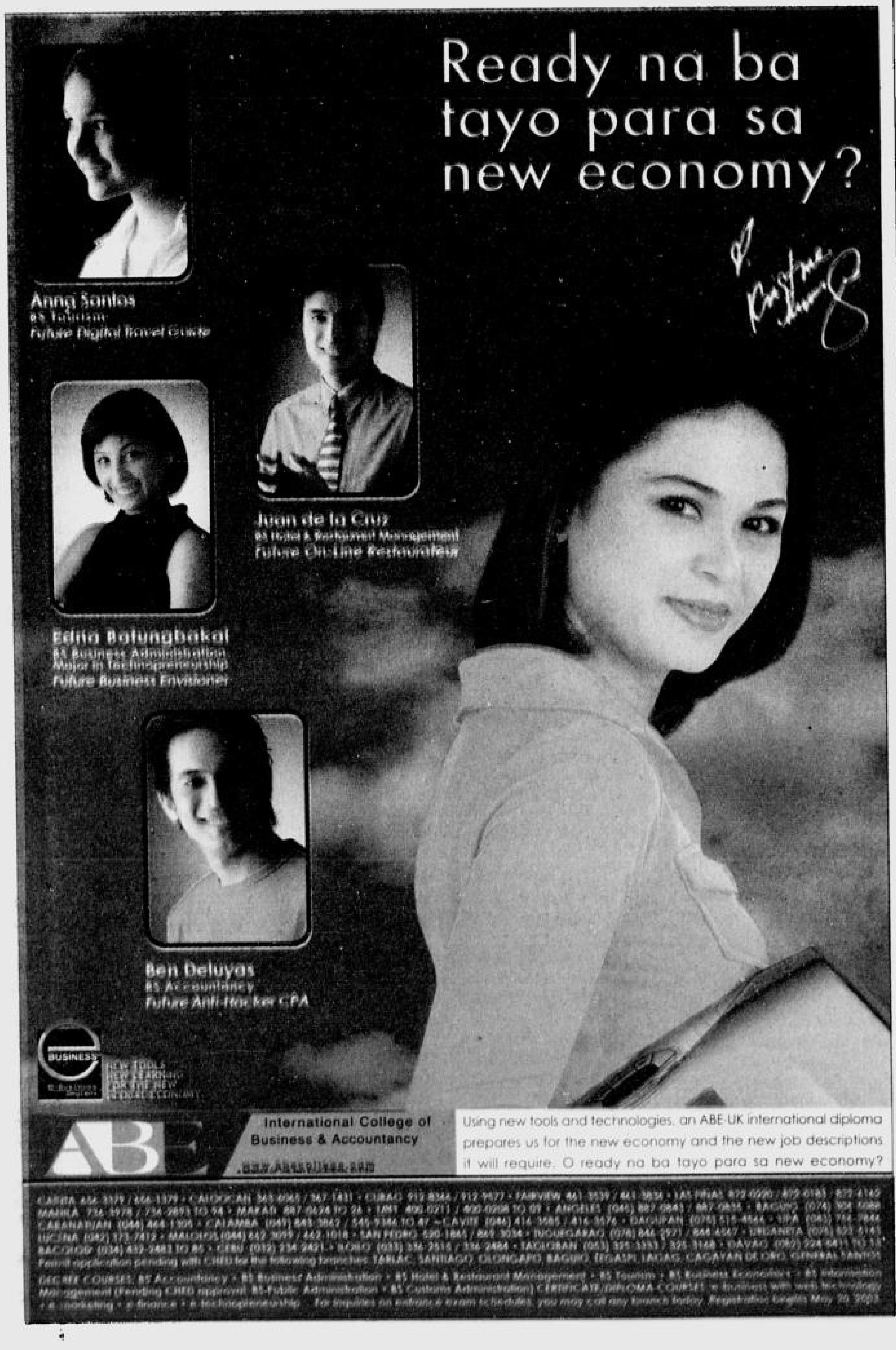
An SBMA official told me when I took a vacation at the complex during the Holy Week that SAF troops have been hunting wild life in the SBMA forests.

Their hunting poses a danger to tourists and SBMA residents alike.

Not only do they hunt wild game, they also engage in illegal logging in the forest within the complex, according to the same SBMA official.

Members of SAF, which has a training camp in jungle survival within the complex, have been suspected of burglaries of houses of residents in the complex.

What kind of discipline do SAF members have?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Using new tools and technologies, an ABE-UK international diploma prepares us for the new economy and the new job descriptions it will require. O ready na ba tayo para sa new economy?

BF wants street thugs to do his 'dirty work'

By Leila Salaverria

WITH garbage accumulating in waterways faster than the authorities can clean it up, what is the Metro Manila Development Authority to do?

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando has an unorthodox solution: Enlist the help of your neighborhood toughies.

Fernando yesterday said that he is not joking when he said he would be enlisting the help of street thugs, or "maton," to prevent their neighbors from throwing their garbage in canals, creeks or rivers.

According to Fernando, the toughies are "natural leaders."

"If they accept the challenge, they can be very effective," he said in a phone interview.

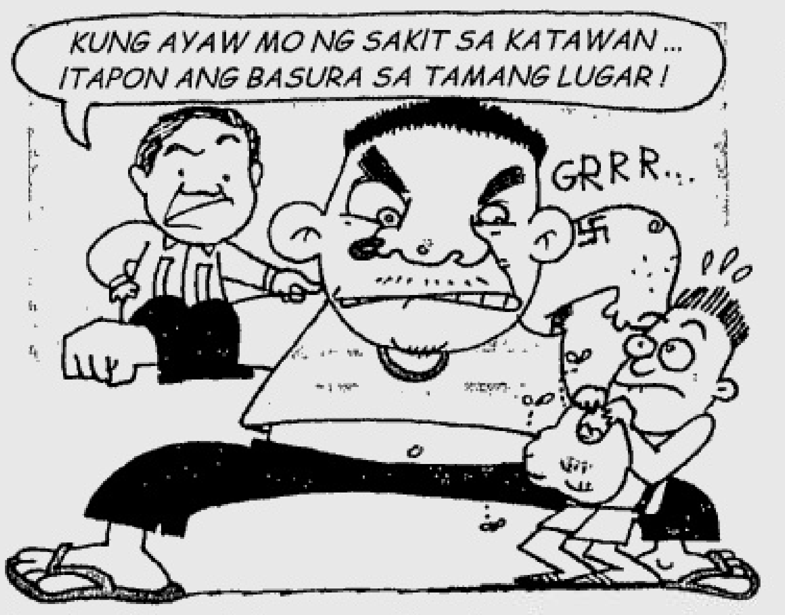
Fernando said that given the thugs' status in their communities, their neighbors are likely to follow their directives.

He added that the MMDA has already appealed for help from so many persons, including the barangay officials, but garbage continues to pile up in Metro Manila's waterways.

"We've called on everyone (for help), now we'll try to call on the maton (thugs)," the MMDA chair said.

MMDA Deputy Chair Cesar Lacuna, who heads the agency's flood control project, said the Fernando is merely encouraging the toughies to help, but won't go to the extent of deputizing them.

He added that someone has to lead the neighborhood in keeping the waterways clean.


KUNG AYAW MO NG SAKIT SA KATAWAN ... ITAPON ANG BASURA SA TAMANG LUGAR!
GRRR...

Lacuna said there is a pressing need to prevent people from throwing their trash in waterways because we will all suffer when the floods hit the metropolis. In less than two months, the rainy season will officially begin, he said.

Lacuna explained that even with the continuous cleaning and dredging of waterways, the rate of return of garbage is high.

Earlier, the deputy chair said barangay officials should be held responsible for the floods in their areas.

Lacuna said it's their duty to prevent their constituents from throwing trash in canals or creeks.

However, there are no clear penalties for irresponsible barangay officials, he added.

Informal settlers who live along riverbanks and creeks also contribute to the problem because all their wastes go directly to the water.

The pumping stations of the MMDA are also choked with garbage, making it difficult to remove floodwaters, MMDA officials have noted.

The MMDA has been cleaning waterways of Metro Manila ever since it assumed responsibility over the flood control projects from the Department of Public Works and Highways last year.

About 1,000 MMDA personnel, as well as a host of mechanical equipment, have been deployed around the metropolis to dredge out the garbage.

MMDA officials have said that while flooding won't disappear in the metropolis, it won't be as deep as before, and the water will recede faster.

This is because it is impossible to keep the metropolis free from flood because the streets and drainage system are old and could not hold all the rainfall that comes.

METROBRIEFS

Shot in Sta. Ana

MARIBEL S. SUELLO, 22, yesterday never got home alive after a soldier shot her pointblank. Detective Virgo Villareal said Pfc. Roel Maputi, 31, of Mayon Street, Sta. Ana, Manila, was reportedly drunk when he barged into the house of Suello's friend, Daniel Barrun, and opened fire with an M-14 rifle, killing the woman. But Maputi denied the charge and claimed it was Barrun who shot Suello. Villareal said Barrun and Maputi had an argument while they were having a drink earlier that night. The incident happened in Barrun's house on Mayon Sreet at around 12:45 a.m. ***Philip Tubeza, Lourdes Valerie Handumon***

Robbed in Manila

ANOTHER Korean man on Saturday was drugged and robbed in Manila. When Byung Kwan Lee woke up, he found himself in a bus bound for the Mountain Province. Lee, 27, currently staying in a hotel in Pasay City, lost more than P15,000 to four women, said SP04 Cecilio Sacorum. Lee identified Melanie Aquino and Aurora Insigne from police mug shots of known members of the Ativan gang. ***Philip Tubeza, Lourdes Valerie Handumon***

Stabbed in Pasig City

VINCENT Evangelista, 26, on Sunday night had just left a bar with his companions when he asked two men who were riding bicycles for some cigarettes and a lighter. When the men refused, Evangelista chased them, shouting invectives. For his trouble, Evangelista, 26, of Taguig, was stabbed in the chest and killed at about 11 p.m. in Karangalan Village, Barangay Manggahan, said SPO2 Rodolfo Salamanca. ***Nelson Flores***

Body found in Caloocan

THE BODY of an unidentified man, believed to have been executed, was found in a vacant lot in Caloocan City on Sunday. The man was described as about 40 years old, stood at 5-foot-2, with a tattoo of a female face in the right shoulder. The victim was wearing denim shorts when his body was found at a vacant lot in Vista Verde, Barangay Llano at 4 p.m. Police said the victim was shot five times. ***Anne Luisa Villarico***

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE) - Procedure to be followed by sheriffs in the implementation of a writ of execution - Section 9, Rule 141 of the Revised Rules of Court prescribes the procedure to be followed by the sheriffs in implementing a writ of execution, thus: "SEC. 9. Sheriffs and other persons serving processes.- xxx. In addition to the fees hereinabove fixed, the party requesting the process of any court, preliminary, incidental, or final, shall pay the sheriff's expenses in serving or executing the process, or safeguarding the property levied upon, attached or seized, including kilometrage for each kilometer of travel, guards' fees, warehousing and similar charges, in an amount estimated by the sheriff, subject to the approval of the court. Upon approval of said estimated expenses, the interested party shall deposit such amount with the clerk of court and ex-oficio sheriff, who shall disburse the same to the deputy sheriff assigned to effect the process, subject to liquidation within the same period for rendering a return on the process. Any unspent amount shall be refunded to the party making the deposit. A full report shall be submitted by the deputy sheriff assigned with his return, and the sheriff's expenses shall be taxed as costs against the judgment debtor." It is clear from the above rule that before an interested party pays the sheriff for his expenses, the latter should first estimate the amount to be approved by the court. Upon approval, the interested party shall deposit the amount with the clerk of court and ex-oficio sheriff who shall disburse it to the sheriff assigned to execute the writ. The amount so disbursed is subject to liquidation. Any unspent amount shall be refunded to the party making the deposit. Thereafter, a full report shall be submitted by the sheriff. Respondent sheriff simply demanded from complainant the sum of P5,000.00 without first furnishing her the estimate or detail of the expenses and without securing court approval. Even conceding that the sum of P5,000.00 demanded by respondent is reasonable, this does not justify his deviation from the procedure laid down in the above Rule.[Citations omitted.] [Justice Sandoval-Gutierrez, Third Division, Danao v. Franco, Jr., A.M. No. P-02-1569. November 13, 2002]

DIGEST BY R. B. VERA

Fear of SARS spawns panic in Parañaque

By Christian Esguerra

FEAR of the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus has gripped a poor community in Parañaque after a woman there was reported to have died of the disease last week.

Incensed city hall officials are blaming a religious group for allegedly spreading rumors that the mysterious disease has killed someone from Clinic Site in Barangay BF.

"Before they spread rumors, they should first verify their information," said an irate Mario Jimenez, the city information officer.

City health officer Monchi Vargas described the information as "hearsay," while her deputy, Dr. Olga Virtusio, said the religious group "overreacted."

In a series of text messages, the group claimed that the victim was a domestic helper from Hong Kong who died at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine in Alabang two weeks ago, Jimenez claimed.

Fearing infection, the organization reportedly suspended its weekly seminar at Clinic Site beginning last Sunday.

But an inquiry by city health officials found an entirely different story.

The text barrage was probably triggered by the death of one Alice Dalimbang, 32, a scavenger from Ipil Site—not Clinic—which is also located in Barangay BF, Vargas said.

Neighbors rushed an unconscious Dalimbang to the Parañaque Community Hospital at around 2 a.m. on April 25, said Dr. Loreleigh Obed, the hospital's medical director.

The woman died at around 6:45 a.m. that day due to septicemia or blood infection, according to Obed.

"We're still tracing the source of the infection," she told the INQUIRER in an interview.

"But definitely, she did not die of SARS. She had no history of fever, cough, and other symptoms of SARS."

Dalimbang, she said, had lost consciousness due to low level of potassium, a condition that normally causes people to collapse.

In case residents receive any information about a possible case of SARS, Obed said they should inform the City Epidimiological Surveillance Unit at 826-8451, or the city hall's radio room at 826-6287.

Coast Guard on alert for ships from SARS-stricken countries

By Philip Tubeza

THE SARS scare in the country has prompted Philippine Coast Guard officials to require ship owners to inform authorities of the arrival of their ships 48 hours before they dock in any port in the country.

The Coast Guard on Friday reported that they intercepted a ship after they learned that one of its crew members, a 21-year-old Myanmar national, reportedly had SARS.

The crewman was taken to the San Lazaro Hospital, but it turned out that he only had tonsilitis.

"As ordered by (Department of Transportation and Communication) Secretary (Leandro) Mendoza, all ship owners ... are required to inform the Coast Guard and the PPA (Philippine Ports Authority) of the arrival of their ships 48 hours before they dock," said Vice Admiral Reuben Lista, PCG chief.

"Before, they were not required to do so," Lista said. "(Now) they are required to inform us about the status of their crew, especially if anyone is sick."

The Coast Guard issued the order after the administration said over the weekend that the SARS crisis has already reached the status of a "national emergency."

Lista said Coast Guard personnel will board ships before they are allowed to dock in ports. They will be accompanied by a doctor from the Bureau of Quarantine.

"We have a quarantine area here in Manila Bay, like in any port around the world," Lista said. "The ship will be ordered to drop anchor there."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, April 29, 2003
2nd Week of Easter

1st Reading: **Acts 4:32-37**

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Because of this, don't be surprised when I say: 'You must be born again from above.'

"The wind blows where it pleases and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus asked again, "How can this be?" And Jesus answered, "You are a teacher in Israel, and you don't know these things!

"Truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we witness to the things we have seen, but you don't accept our testimony. If you don't believe when I speak of earthly things, what then, when I speak to you of heavenly things? No one has ever gone up to heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Commentary

Only Jesus can reveal to us the things of God because he is the only one who seen and heard God. It is already beyond our human understanding that God wants to reveal his secrets to us. It is a greater mystery that to achieve that, the Son of God became Son of Man. Yet a still greater mystery is that the high point of revelation comes in the lifting up of the Son of Man, his crucifixion-"for the Jeews, what a great scandal! And for the Greeks, what nonsense!" (1Cor 1:23). What is achieved in death? Do we not all cling to life? Prolong it as long as we can? Does not death bring only pain and sorrow? Maybe there is more to death than we are willing to see.

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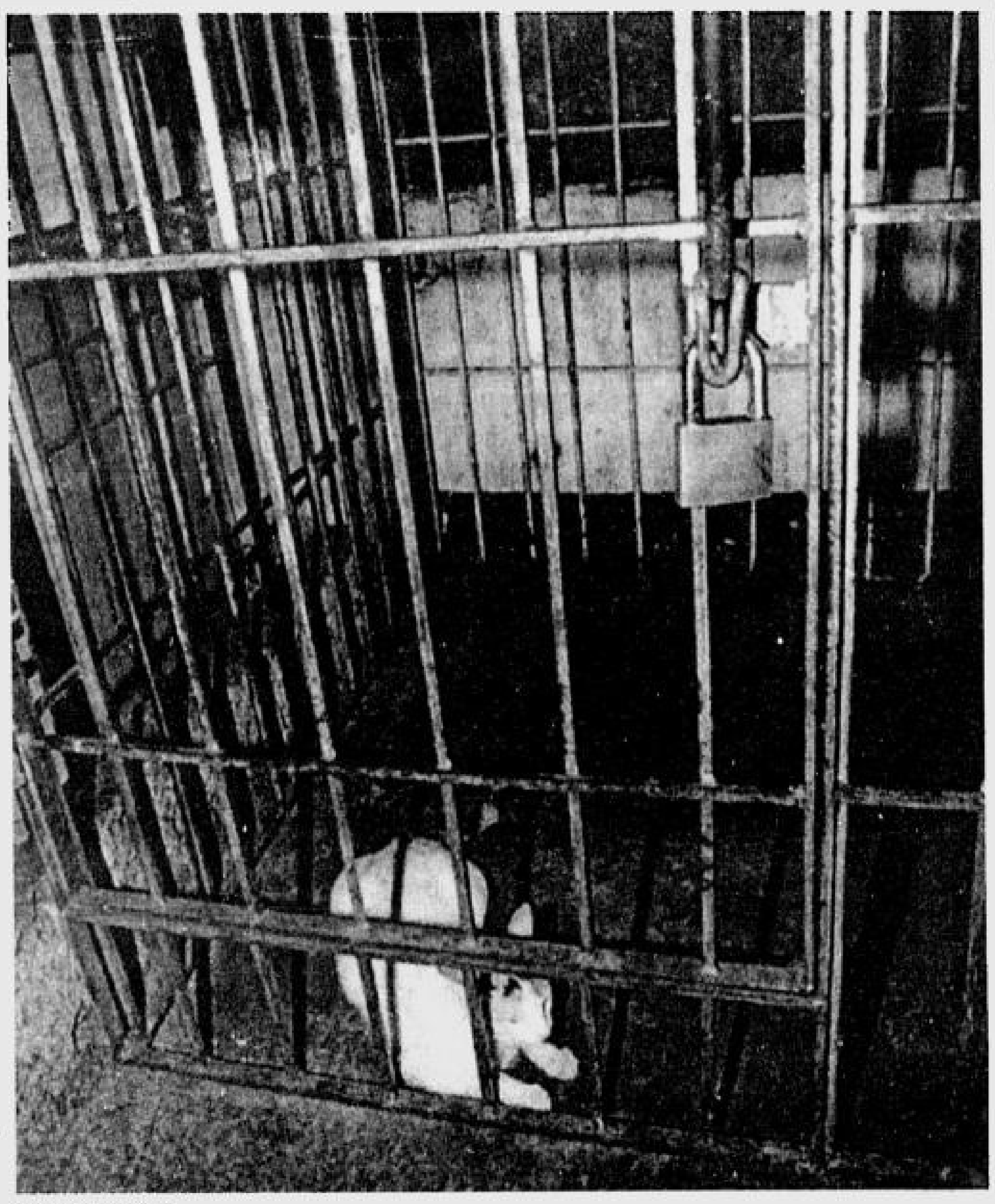

COOL CAT
A street cat sits comfortably on its rump in a Pasay City police station's detention cell. This was the sight that greeted President Macapagal-Arroyo when she paid a surprise visit to the station on April 10. Finding no evildoers behind bars—just a cool cat—Ms Macapagal naturally blew her top.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Yambao cracks whip on Malabon city workers; Vicencio still defiant

By Anne Luisa Villarico

ON HIS first day on the job, Mark Allan Jay Yambao threatened to charge with insubordination Malabon city workers who refused to recognize him as acting mayor of Malabon City.

"Those (people) who still continue to question the validity of the suspension order (on Mayor Amado Vicencio) can address their legal questions in the proper courts," Yambao said in a phone interview.

The vice mayor yesterday also called for a special audit of all city transactions through the Commission on Audit, tasking the agency to take charge of the inventories.

Before calling a meeting with all city department heads yesterday afternoon, Yambao defined his priorities as acting mayor. He said he would continue to provide basic services for the people, ease traffic flow, and tend to overflowing canals to prevent flooding in the area.

Yambao assumed office shortly after the suspension order was served to Vicencio. The Malabon mayor has been suspended for 60 days allegedly for engaging in the dubious purchase of property intended for squatters.

Some Malabon city hall workers remain steadfast in their support for Vicencio.

The city's public information officer, Gerry Gonzales, yesterday said that Vicencio is "exhausting all legal remedies" to lift the suspension order.

Gonzales said Vicencio also has the support of six Metro Manila mayors.

He claimed mayors Peewee Trinidad of Pasay City, Toby Tiangco of Navotas, Lito Atienza of Manila, JV Ejercito of San Juan, Rosendo Capco of Pateros, and Jejomar Binay of Makati City, signed a manifesto of support during the Metro Manila Mayors Council meeting held in Malabon last Saturday.

The information officer added that Vicencio is still waiting for the Temporary Restraining Order from the Court of Appeals.

Yesterday, Vicencio attended a thanksgiving mass at the San Bartolome Church in San Agustin, Malabon to thank his supporters and appeal to his constituents to lift the barricades.

'Kidnapped' woman emerges

By Leila Salaverria

"I WAS not abducted."

This was what Angelina Kim Rabello had to say about her reported abduction in Makati City on April 12.

Rabello on Saturday told the Inquirer that her cousin, Jovelyn Sison—who reported the abduction—and Sison's brother had invented the story about the abduction because they were worried about the death threats on Rabello.

Rabello, 38, explained that she and her adopted sister have been at odds over the inheritance money their mother had left them.

Their mother was murdered in Parañaque in February this year.

Rabello said that since then, she has been receiving death threats.

Rabello said that Sison had hoped that if she were to report that Rabello had been kidnapped, the police might inspect Rabello's house, where the latter's adopted sister also lives.

Sison and her brother had not expected that the reported abduction would make it to the newspapers, Rabello said.

Rabello added that her sister and the sister's husband have threatened to harm not only her, but Sison as well.

Sison also said in a letter faxed to the Inquirer that the reported abduction was not true.

On April 12, the day of their supposed abduction in Makati, Rabello said that she, Sison, and the latter's two-year-old son, had dinner at an A&W restaurant and had gone home.

During the time she was supposed to be missing, Rabello said she had moved in with a friend because she did not want to stay with her sister at their house in Valenzuela.

She said she has also stopped going to work because of the family squabble.

Sison, Rabello said, has already gone home to the province.

FOUR DIGIT
6 1 0 4
(In exact order)
SUERTRES
5 8 2

MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 4 7 22 42 45

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo congratulates women barangay *tanods* who were among those who graduated from a barangay *tanod* professionalization course during graduation rites at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City Monday.

ERIK ARAZAS

Look what SARS scare can do

By Carlito Pablo

THERE'S a good side to the present scare caused by the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

Filipinos, according to Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, are getting more hygienic and concerned about the cleanliness of their communities out of fear of the deadly SARS virus.

"We're glad to see that people are washing their hands more often, covering their mouths when sneezing, and controlling the habit of spitting in public," Bunye said in a radio interview.

"Perhaps that is one good side effect resulting from the SARS scare: the observance of personal hygiene and community cleanliness," Bunye said. "Let's take care of our personal health."

Meanwhile, President Macapagal-Arroyo announced yesterday that she will declare May 5 as the start of "clean-up week and SARS consciousness week."

"There's a big connection between cleanliness and safety from SARS," the President said in a speech before newly trained barangay *tanods* (village watchmen) at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City.

The President related that based on television reports she

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▨ **SARS panic in Parañaque** A19

▨ **Coast Guard alert on ships** A19

FERNANDO OUT OF DPWH

Metro projects now in peril?

By Leila B. Salaverria

WITH Bayani Fernando stepping down from the Public Works and Highways department to handle the Metro Manila Development Authority, what will happen to the projects handled jointly by the two agencies?

MMDA officials are worried that red tape or bureaucracy may hamper the progress of the ongoing projects.

These projects include the construction of bridges across the Pasig River, the building of newly designed pedestrian overpasses, and the geometric improvement of roadways, which includes the widening of streets and the construction of wider U-turn slots.

Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios expressed hope that the close coordination between MMDA and DPWH would continue just like when Fernando headed both agencies.

"We have to wait and see (if the projects won't be stalled)," he said yesterday.

Deputy MMDA Chair Cesar Lacuna said he was saddened by Fernando's leaving the DPWH post because of the ease with which the two agencies coordinated on the flood control project in the metropolis.

He added that the dredging machines that the MMDA has been using to clean up clogged waterways belong to the DPWH.

Still, Lacuna believes the new DWPH secretary will be cooperative.

Fernando yesterday made the assurance that the progress of the projects won't be hampered.

He said he has already organized the mechanics of the projects so that they would be completed smoothly.

He also denied that he has been pressured to leave the post, saying he did so because of questions about the legality of holding two Cabinet positions.

Reps. Jacinto Paras of Negros Oriental and Prospero Pichay of Surigao del Sur, the two congressmen who questioned the legality of such a setup, lauded Fernando's decision.

Paras hailed it as a "noble act" on the part of Fernando, saying "he eased the burden of a constitutional violation on the President."

Pichay said Fernando was right in sticking to only one job, saying he could not be expected to be effective in both.

"I think he is really more effective in MMDA," Pichay said. *With a report from Juliet L. Javellana*

They simply won't let rumors die

By Dona Pazzibugan

RATHER than being put to rest, rumors about former justice secretary Hernando Perez's Cabinet comeback flared following Bayani Fernando's resignation as public works secretary.

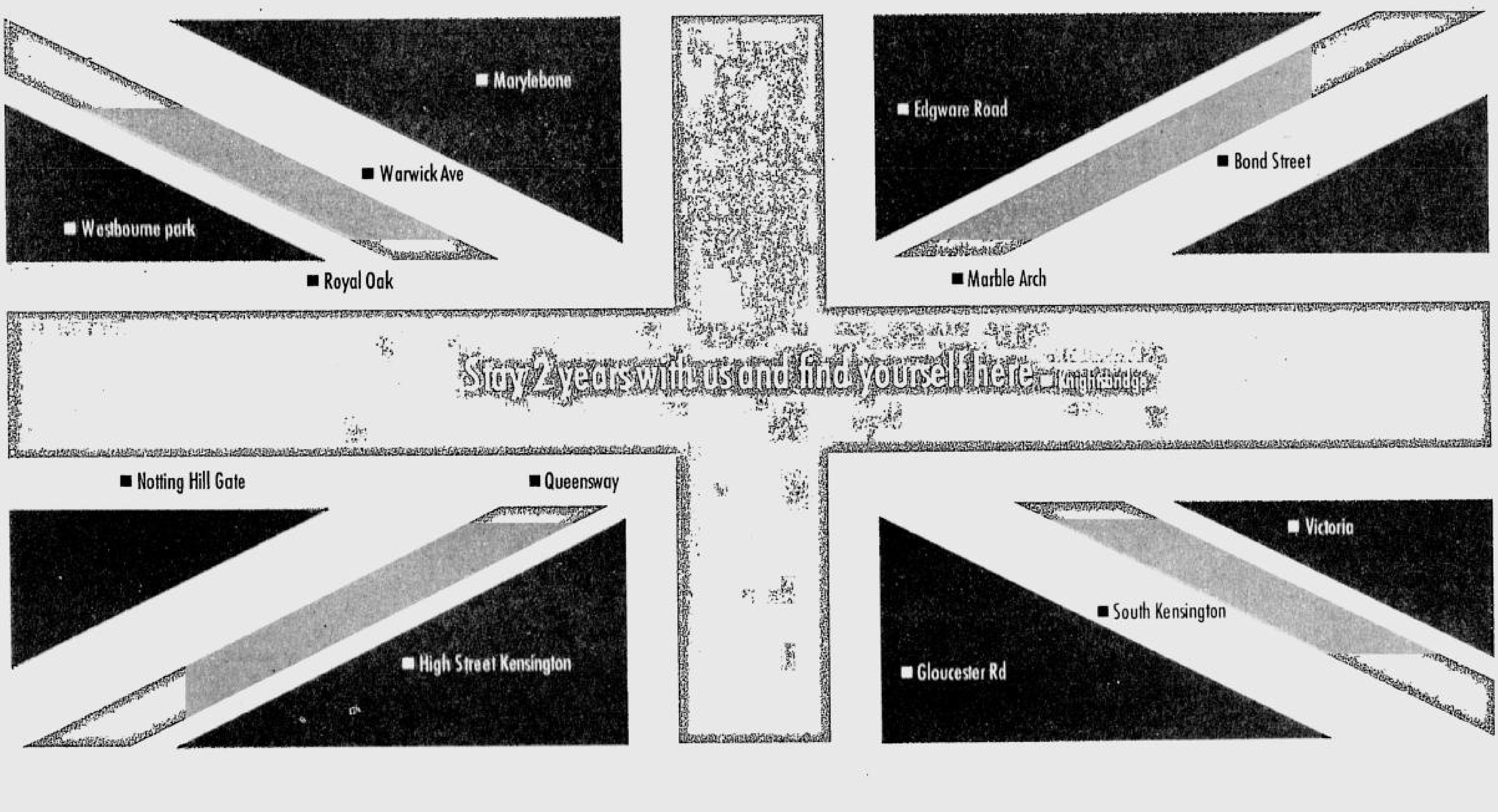
For the past few weeks, talks have been going around that Perez would be appointed transportation secretary as part of a Cabinet reshuffle.

President Macapagal-Arroyo cut short her press briefing in Baguio City during the Holy Week when a reporter asked her about it.

But it was finally brought to the open yesterday, a day after Fernando quit his DPWH post.

According to the rumor mill, Perez would take over from Transportation Secre-

PEREZ'S/ A18



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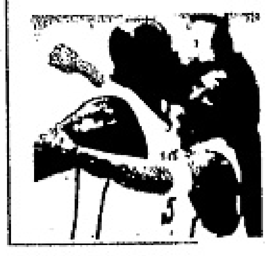
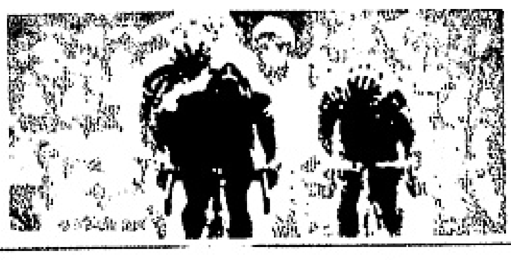

Shaq keeps Lakers alive /A22


Quirimit unmoved by ex-champ's win /A22

Fred Couples a winner again /A23

It's go for Lanao Palaro, military, MILF confirm

By Marc Anthony Reyes

BY ALL indications, it's still going to be Tubod, Lanao del Norte but probably at a later date.

Prospects of holding the Palarong Pambansa at its original venue looked bright yesterday after the Armed Forces Southern Command assured officials of the host province they can stage the 2003 national games free from disruption from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

As this developed, a ranking leader of the MILF also confirmed an Inquirer story that the rebel group had assured Philippine Olympic Committee chairman Robert Aventajado of a trouble-free Palaro.

"If there are disturbances, surely it will not come from our group," Ghazali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, said.

Lanao del Norte Gov. Imelda Quibranza-Dimaporo said she was assured by Southern Command chief, Maj. Gen. Roy Kyamco, that the military has restored order in the province five days after MILF members attacked two towns near Tubod, where the Palaro will be held.

"The military has already assured us that everything is under control," said Dimaporo.

Sources, however, said the Games will be moved from the original schedule of May 4-11. The tentative date is May 11-18.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye had already suggested over the weekend that the Palaro be held at a later date to be decided by the Phippine Sports Commission, the Department of Education and and the host province.

PSC chairman Eric Buhain said he is still waiting the final assessment of AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya before meeting the DepEd regional directors, who oversee the preparation of the athletes seeing action in the school-based meet.

President Arroyo has the final word on the fate of the Palaro based on the recommendation of the PSC, DepEd and the provincial government.

Meanwhile, police officials said the MILF assurance that it would not mount attacks during the staging of the Palaro should not be taken seriously.

Deputy Director General Virtus Gil, deputy chief for operation, pointed out that MILF local commanders often act independently and launch offensives even without the go-signal of their top officials.

He cited for instance that last week's attacks on the towns of Maigo and Kolambugan, led by one Commander Bravo, did not have the blessings of the MILF hierarchy according to military reports.

Gil, concurrent commander of Task Force Mindanao, also suggested that the games, where 5,000 student athletes are competing, not only be held in a more secure area but rescheduled as well.

But if the Palaro goes on as scheduled in Tubod, Gil said he would double the security force of 1,400 personnel and bring along a Marine brigade to secure the athletes.

In a telephone interview, Jaafar said Murad Ebrahim, MILF military affairs chief, had ordered field commanders in the two Lanao provinces "not to harm the delegates from other areas in the country who are passing through areas where the MILF operate."

"The Palarong Pambansa will not experience disturbances from the MILF. If it does, it will not come from us," he said. ***With reports from TJ Burgonio and Edwin O. Fernandez (PDI Mindanao Bureau)***

Season's over for Torion

THE SEASON'S over for Jimwell Torion.

This was announced yesterday by Philippine Basketball Association commissioner Noli Eala as he amended the "indefinite suspension" earlier slapped on Batang Red Bull's flashy point guard who was found to have taken shabu during a recent drug testing.

"His (Torion) case will be evaluated after a year," Eala told the INQUIRER. "So it's safe to say that he will be out for at least a year."

Torion's suspension was the harshest ever imposed by the league for a drug offender. The 5-foot-7 Cebuano was also ordered to undergo rehabilitation.

The one-year ban is relatively light since the National Basketball Association imposes a two-year ban for drug use.

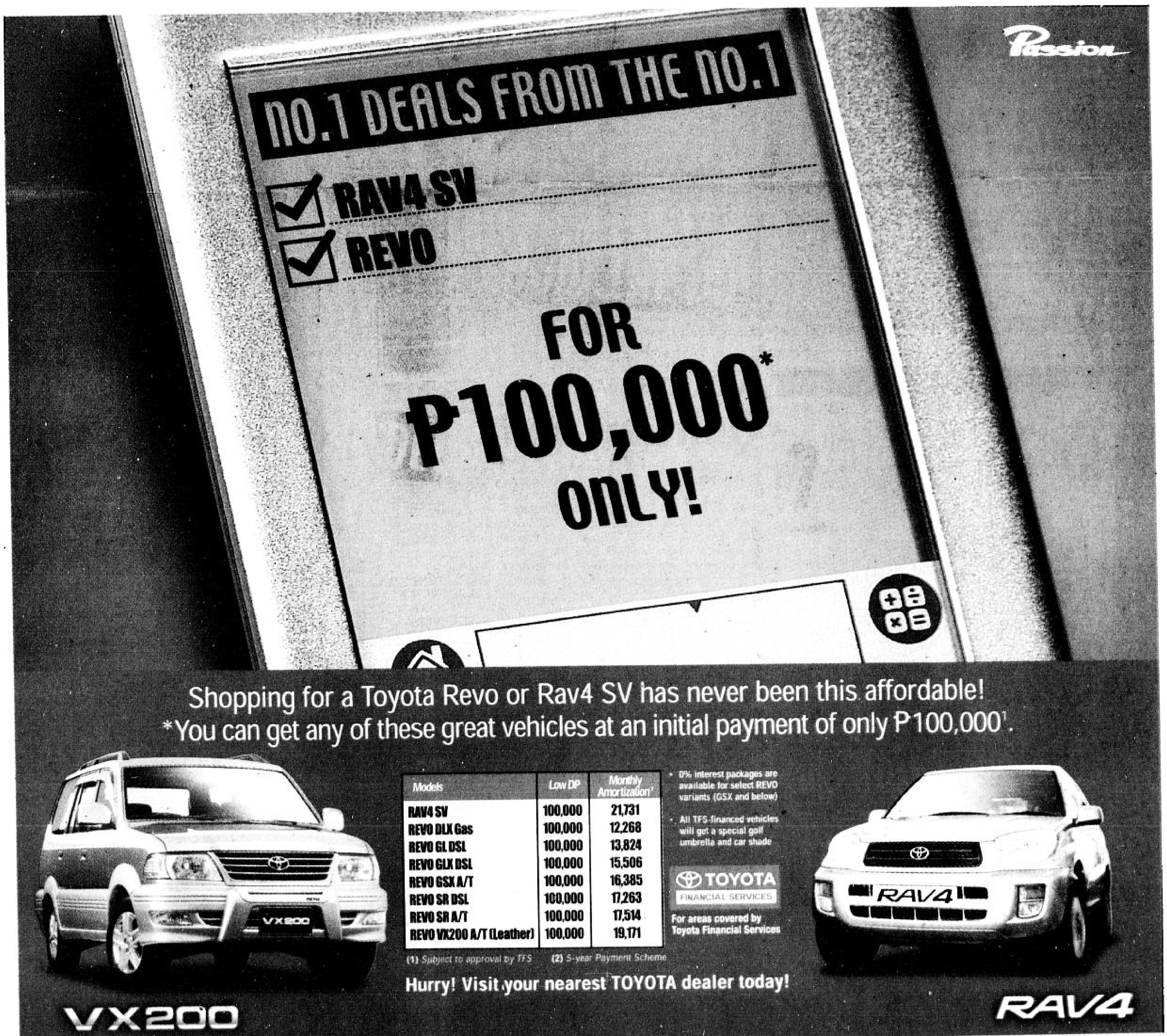
"There will surely be different punishment depending on the types of substances used," said Eala, referring to the anti-drug policy which the league is currently drafting.

"But we don't want to treat this as a criminal issue but as a social issue. We don't want to condemn the players but instead educate them of the dangers of using drugs," said Eala.

He said the league will conduct seminars and workshops regarding its drug program.

"I will explain to them how grave and serious the matter is," said Eala.

The PBA chief also admitted that the drug issue has damaging effects on the "league that prides itself as a model for the youth." *Marc Anthony Reyes*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PROMO PERIOD April 20 to 30, 2003. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0937, Series of 2003

TOYOTA

Shaq keeps Lakers alive

SPORTSWATCH

Montecarlo wins

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Boston now leads the series 3-1, with Game 5 Tuesday in Indiana.

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Wolves 2, Lakers 2
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Overall Standings

RANK	RIDER		TEAM	TIME
1	Quirimit	Arnel	TAN	08h53'31
2	Barnachea	Santi	BOW	05'05
3	Ramos	Merculo	SAM	05'16
4	Valdez	Placido	DRU	06'55
5	Quiñones	Eusebio	PAT	07'00
6	Pagnanawon	Rolando	BOW	08'32
7	Gorrantes	Ronald	ECO	09'02
8	Reynante	Lloyd	PAG	09'23
9	Tanguilig	Rhyan	PAG	same
10	Guieb	Carlo	ECO	10'23
11	Lopez	Benito	VAT	10'28
12	Espino	Arnel	PAG	10'29
13	Gorantes	Reinhard	ECO	10'31
14	Luzon	Bernard	PAT	11'52
15	Valdez	Rodelio	SAM	11'55
16	Davadilla	Warren	INT	12'08
17	Curtan	Paterno	ECO	12'38
18	Amar	Gerry	PAT	13'05
19	Domingo	Enrique	POS	13'12
20	Alagano	Fernando	INT	13'23
21	Diamsay	Sherwin	VAT	13'35
22	Bucay	Arthur	INT	13'40
23	Calderon	Joel	VAT	13'55
24	Talaver	Joffrey	BOW	14'17
25	Catalan	Alfie	BOW	14'21
26	Mendoza	Dionisio	BOW	14'24
27	Obosa	Ericson	TAN	14'30
28	Dolosa	Renato	GIL	15'21
29	Jazul	Carlo	ECO	17'28
30	Posilero	Dionisio	PAT	17'35
31	Jacob	Dominador	TAN	17'44
32	Feliciano	Frederick	DRU	18'40
33	Calosa	Wilfredo	POS	18'43
34	Ganigan	Danny	SAM	18'59
35	Mendoza	Manuel	SAM	19'43
36	Primero	Albert	PLD	same
37	Marcelo	Arnold	POS	19'16
38	Casaljay	Ruel	GIL	19'31
39	Millanes	Joseph	TAN	19'37
40	Celeste	Felix	VAT	19'40
41	Estayo	Nilo	INT	20'31
42	Reyes	Michael	INT	same
43	Espiritu	Oscar	TAN	20'45
44	Mendoza	Ryan	PAT	20'48
45	Gonowon	Michael	BOW	21'04
46	Atilano	Lito	GIL	21'52
47	Mapa	Alfredo	BOW	22'18
48	Bacudo	Jessie	PLD	25'03
49	Del Rosario	Noli	PLD	25'29
50	Navarro	Reynaldo	POS	25'42
51	Fronda	Oscar	PLD	26'00
52	Galdonez	Razon	INT	26'22
53	Manapol	Paulo	INT	same
54	Robosa	Marcial	VAT	27'25
55	Bayuga	Avelino	VAT	27'26
56	Tolentino	Jay	PAG	27'52
57	Muena	Virgilio	PLD	28'31
58	Guillen	Joel	PAG	29'17
59	Tacu-tacu	Dominador	SAM	30'48
60	Servino	Joseph	PAT	31'20
61	Marmol	Benigno	GIL	32'57
62	Espiritu	Virgilio	ECO	33'20
63	Asuncion	Reynaldo	GIL	33'31
64	Dela Cruz	Art	DRU	34'00
65	Villanueva	June	PAG	34'05
66	Atizado	Norberto	DRU	35'00
67	Primero	Michael	GIL	35'45
68	Hardin	Desi	GIL	36'41
69	Garcia	Jesus	TAN	36'51
70	Tolentino	Eric	TAN	37'51

THIRD LAP RESULTS

RANK	RIDER		TEAM	TIME
1	Davadilla	Warren	INT	02h18'42
2	Catalan	Alfie	BOW	same
3	Luzon	Bernard	PAT	same
4	Atilano	Lito	GIL	00'02
5	Tanguilig	Rhyan	PAG	same
6	Gorrantes	Ronald	ECO	same
7	Quirimit	Arnel	TAN	same
8	Reynante	Lloyd	PAG	same
9	Ramos	Merculo	SAM	00'46
10	Casaljay	Ruel	GIL	00'49
11	Diamsay	Sherwin	VAT	same
12	Calosa	Wilfredo	POS	same
13	Valdez	Placido	DRU	same
14	Domingo	Enrique	POS	same
15	Curtan	Paterno	ECO	same

TEAM STANDINGS

Place	Team	Time
1	Pagcor	09h17'12.6
2	Gilbeys Island Punch	09h17'59.6
3	Eco Savers	09h17'59.6
4	Intel	09h18'02.4
5	Bowling Gold	09h18'06.4
6	Patrol 117	09h18'12.5
7	Tanduay Distillers	09h18'19.0
8	Postmen	09h18'46.5
9	Samsung	09h19'03.1
10	Vat Riders	09h19'05.9
11	PLDT-NDD	09h30'20.7
12	Drug Busters	09h32'30.2

TOUR PILIPINAS

Quirimit unmoved by ex-champ's win

By June Navarro

DAET (Via PLDT)—Tanduay's Arnel Quirimit padded his overall lead yesterday even as Warren Davadilla of Intel showed the way home for an eight-man lead pack to rule the third lap of the Tour Pilipinas 2003 bikathon presented by Air21 here.

Flashing the form that crowned him as 1998 Tour champion, the 27-year-old Davadilla pushed his weary legs to the limit in the last 200 meters to cross the line just ahead of his two former national teammates.

Davadilla nipped Alfie Catalan of Bowling Gold for lap honors with Luzon settling for third.

The three, who left their breakaway partners that included Quirimit, Patrol 117 skipper Bernard Luzon and Lloyd Reynante of Pagcor Sports in the mad scramble in the last 100 meters, clocked two hours, 18 minutes and 42 seconds for the 98-km ride from Naga City.

"All I wanted was to cut the time deficit and enter the Magic 10. It never crossed my mind to take this lap," said Davadilla, who climbed two notches from 18th, in Pilipino.

Despite finishing ninth, Quirimit increased his advantage over Bowling Gold skipper Santy Barnachea to five minutes and five seconds.

Barnachea finished 17th for the day, a minute four seconds behind Davadilla.

"There's nothing to fear even though I didn't win the lap. In fact, I sacrificed this stage because my closest pursuers were not even in the lead pack," said Quirimit, who has trained his sights on the P200,000 top individual prize.

Quirimit checked in two seconds behind Davadilla in the company of Lito Atilano of Gilbeys Island Punch, Rhyan Tanguilig of Pagcor Sports, Ronald Gorantes (EcoSavers) and Reynante.

With Davadilla, Catalan and Luzon leading the way, the day's leading riders bolted from the main pack in the last 15 km of the easy drive from Naga City.

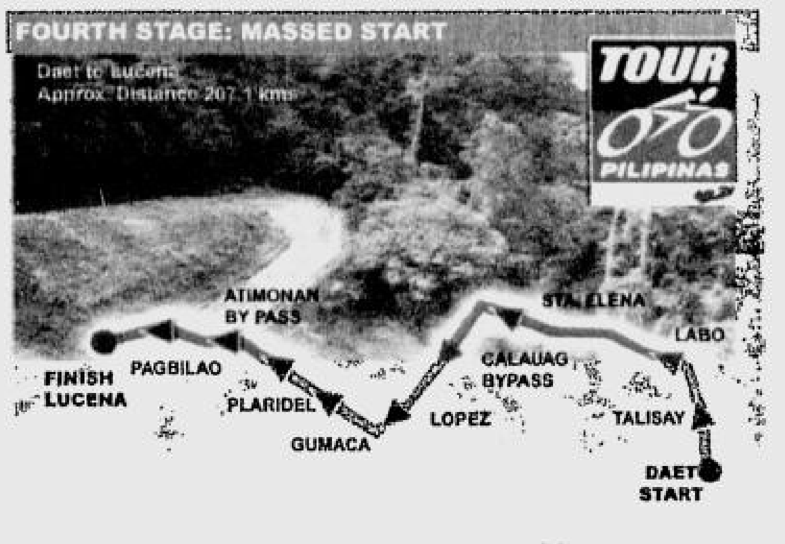
Merculio Ramos of Samsung kept third overall (5:16 behind) followed by Tour veteran Placido Valdez of Drug Busters, who switched places with Eusebio Quinones of Patrol 117.

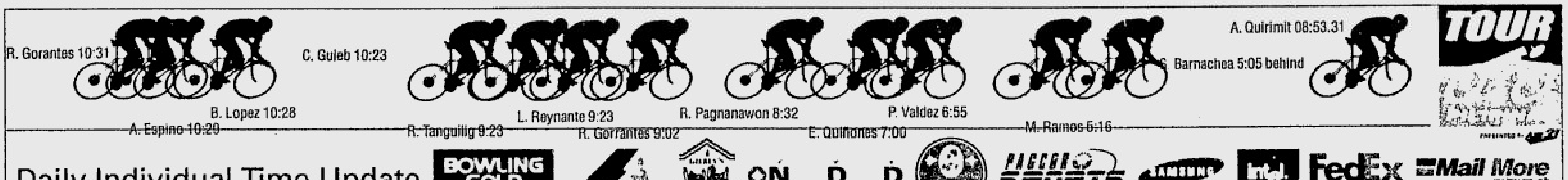
Former champion Rolando Pagnanawon, the oldest rider here at 43, clung to sixth place, Gorantes stayed in seventh and Reynante took over as No. 8 as two-time winner Carlo Guieb dropped to 10th behind Tanguilig.

Tanduay stayed on top of the team standings but is in danger of being overhauled by Bowling Gold, which moved within 16 seconds off the leader. Patrol 117 and Pagcor Sports held third and fourth, respectively, in the team race while EcoSavers, Samsung, Vat Riders and Intel kept their positions in the race for the top team prize of P1 million.

The Postmen climbed one notch from 10th to 9th and Gilbeys Island Punch improved to 10th overall in the race sponsored by Accel, Longines, Lipovitan and Selle Italia.

The Drugbusters and PLDT-NDD fell to 11th and 12th, respectively.





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Game 2: Sacramento 108, Utah 95
Game 3 Utah 107, Sacramento 104
Game 4: at Utah (April 29)

(3) Dallas vs (6) Portland
Mavs 3, Blazers 1
Game 1: Dallas 96, Portland 86
Game 2: Dallas 103, Portland 99
Game 3: Dallas 115, Portland 103
Game 4: Portland 98, Dallas 79
Game 5 at Dallas (May 1)

(4) Minnesota vs. (5) LA Lakers
Wolves 2, Lakers 2
Game 1: LA Lakers 117, Minnesota 98
Game 2: Minnesota 119, LA Lakers 91
Game 3: Minnesota 114, LA Lakers 110
Game 4: LA Lakers 102, Minnesota 97
Game 5 at LA (April 30)

Overall Standings

RANK	RIDER		TEAM	TIME
1	Quirimit	Arnel	TAN	08h53'31
2	Barnachea	Santi	BOW	05'05
3	Ramos	Merculo	SAM	05'16
4	Valdez	Placido	DRU	06'55
5	Quiñones	Eusebio	PAT	07'00
6	Pagnanawon	Rolando	BOW	08'32
7	Gorrantes	Ronald	ECO	09'02
8	Reynante	Lloyd	PAG	09'23
9	Tanguilig	Rhyan	PAG	same
10	Guieb	Carlo	ECO	10'23
11	Lopez	Benito	VAT	10'28
12	Espino	Arnel	PAG	10'29
13	Gorantes	Reinhard	ECO	10'31
14	Luzon	Bernard	PAT	11'52
15	Valdez	Rodelio	SAM	11'55
16	Davadilla	Warren	INT	12'08
17	Curtan	Paterno	ECO	12'38
18	Amar	Gerry	PAT	13'05
19	Domingo	Enrique	POS	13'12
20	Alagano	Fernando	INT	13'23
21	Diamsay	Sherwin	VAT	13'35
22	Bucay	Arthur	INT	13'40
23	Calderon	Joel	VAT	13'55
24	Talaver	Joffrey	BOW	14'17
25	Catalan	Alfie	BOW	14'21
26	Mendoza	Dionisio	BOW	14'24
27	Obosa	Ericson	TAN	14'30
28	Dolosa	Renato	GIL	15'21
29	Jazul	Carlo	ECO	17'28
30	Posilero	Dionisio	PAT	17'35
31	Jacob	Dominador	TAN	17'44
32	Feliciano	Frederick	DRU	18'40
33	Calosa	Wilfredo	POS	18'43
34	Garigan	Danny	SAM	18'59
35	Mendoza	Manuel	SAM	19'43
36	Primero	Albert	PLD	same
37	Marcelo	Arnold	POS	19'16
38	Casaljay	Ruel	GIL	19'31
39	Millanes	Joseph	TAN	19'37
40	Celeste	Felix	VAT	19'40
41	Estayo	Nilo	INT	20'31
42	Reyes	Michael	INT	same
43	Espiritu	Oscar	TAN	20'45
44	Mendoza	Ryan	PAT	20'48
45	Gonowon	Michael	BOW	21'04
46	Atilano	Lito	GIL	21'52
47	Mapa	Alfredo	BOW	22'18
48	Bacudo	Jessie	PLD	25'03
49	Del Rosario	Noli	PLD	25'29
50	Navarro	Reynaldo	POS	25'42
51	Fronda	Oscar	PLD	26'00
52	Galdonez	Razon	INT	26'22
53	Manapol	Paulo	INT	same
54	Robosa	Marcial	VAT	27'25
55	Bayuga	Avelino	VAT	27'26
56	Tolentino	Jay	PAG	27'52
57	Muena	Virgilio	PLD	28'31
58	Guillen	Joel	PAG	29'17
59	Tacu-tacu	Dominador	SAM	30'48
60	Servino	Joseph	PAT	31'20
61	Marmol	Benigno	GIL	32'57
62	Espiritu	Virgilio	ECO	33'20
63	Asuncion	Reynaldo	GIL	33'31
64	Dela Cruz	Art	DRU	34'00
65	Villanueva	June	PAG	34'05
66	Atizado	Norberto	DRU	35'00
67	Primero	Michael	GIL	35'45
68	Hardin	Desi	GIL	36'41
69	Garcia	Jesus	TAN	36'51
70	Tolentino	Eric	TAN	37'51

THIRD LAP RESULTS

RANK	RIDER		TEAM	TIME
1	Davadilla	Warren	INT	02h18'42
2	Catalan	Alfie	BOW	same
3	Luzon	Bernard	PAT	same
4	Atilano	Lito	GIL	00'02
5	Tanguilig	Rhyan	PAG	same
6	Gorrantes	Ronald	ECO	same
7	Quirimit	Arnel	TAN	same
8	Reynante	Lloyd	PAG	same
9	Ramos	Merculo	SAM	00'46
10	Casaljay	Ruel	GIL	00'49
11	Diamsay	Sherwin	VAT	same
12	Calosa	Wilfredo	POS	same
13	Valdez	Placido	DRU	same
14	Domingo	Enrique	POS	same
15	Curtan	Paterno	ECO	same

TEAM STANDINGS

Place	Team	Time
1	Pagcor	09h17'12.6
2	Gilbeys Island Punch	09h17'59.6
3	Eco Savers	09h17'59.6
4	Intel	09h18'02.4
5	Bowling Gold	09h18'06.4
6	Patrol 117	09h18'12.5
7	Tanduay Distillers	09h18'19.0
8	Postmen	09h18'46.5
9	Samsung	09h19'03.1
10	Vat Riders	09h19'05.9
11	PLDT-NDD	09h30'20.7
12	Drug Busters	09h32'30.2

TOUR PILIPINAS

Quirimit unmoved by ex-champ's win

By June Navarro

DAET (Via PLDT)—Tanduay's Arnel Quirimit padded his overall lead yesterday even as Warren Davadilla of Intel showed the way home for an eight-man lead pack to rule the third lap of the Tour Pilipinas 2003 bikathon presented by Air21 here.

Flashing the form that crowned him as 1998 Tour champion, the 27-year-old Davadilla pushed his weary legs to the limit in the last 200 meters to cross the line just ahead of his two former national teammates.

Davadilla nipped Alfie Catalan of Bowling Gold for lap honors with Luzon settling for third.

The three, who left their breakaway partners that included Quirimit, Patrol 117 skipper Bernard Luzon and Lloyd Reynante of Pagcor Sports in the mad scramble in the last 100 meters, clocked two hours, 18 minutes and 42 seconds for the 98-km ride from Naga City.

"All I wanted was to cut the time deficit and enter the Magic 10. It never crossed my mind to take this lap," said Davadilla, who climbed two notches from 18th, in Pilipino.

Despite finishing ninth, Quirimit increased his advantage over Bowling Gold skipper Santy Barnachea to five minutes and five seconds.

Barnachea finished 17th for the day, a minute four seconds behind Davadilla.

"There's nothing to fear even though I didn't win the lap. In fact, I sacrificed this stage because my closest pursuers were not even in the lead pack," said Quirimit, who has trained his sights on the P200,000 top individual prize.

Quirimit checked in two seconds behind Davadilla in the company of Lito Atilano of Gilbeys Island Punch, Rhyan Tanguilig of Pagcor Sports, Ronald Gorantes (EcoSavers) and Reynante.

With Davadilla, Catalan and Luzon leading the way, the day's leading riders bolted from the main pack in the last 15 km of the easy drive from Naga City.

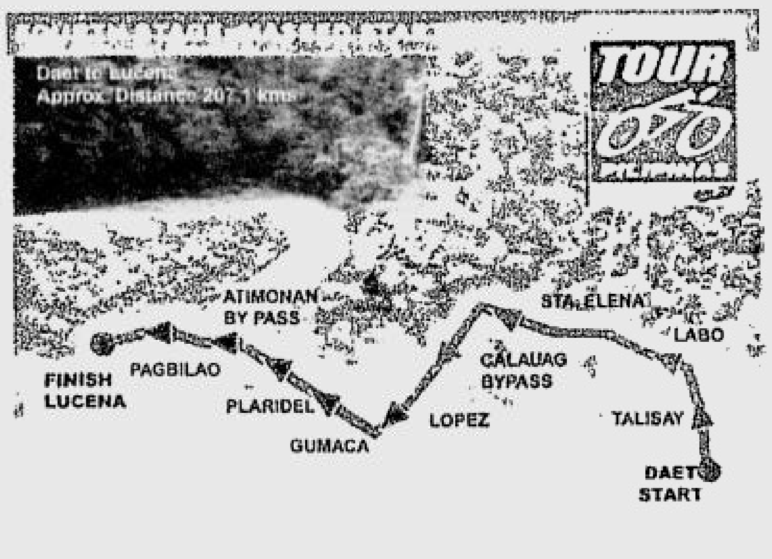
Merculio Ramos of Samsung kept third overall (5:16 behind) followed by Tour veteran Placido Valdez of Drug Busters, who switched places with Eusebio Quinones of Patrol 117.

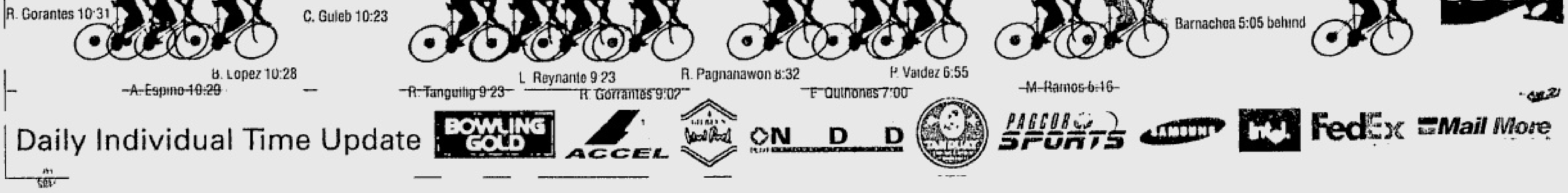
Former champion Rolando Pagnanawon, the oldest rider here at 43, clung to sixth place Gorantes stayed in seventh and Reynante took over as No. 8 as two-time winner Carlo Guieb dropped to 10th behind Tanguilig.

Tanduay stayed on top of the team standings but is in danger of being overhauled by Bowling Gold, which moved within 16 seconds off the leader Patrol 117 and Pagcor Sports held third and fourth, respectively, in the team race while EcoSavers, Samsung, Vat Riders and Intel kept their positions in the race for the top team prize of P1 million.

The Postmen climbed one notch from 10th to 9th and Gilbeys Island Punch improved to 10th overall in the race sponsored by Accel, Longines, Lipovitan and Selle Italia.

The Drugbusters and PLDT-NDD fell to 11th and 12th, respectively.





Daily Individual Time Update

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Courting wholesale carnage

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WHAT? Did I read them right?

Twice it came out in this newspaper, the second one coming out only yesterday. The head of the second story read: "MILF vows to spare Palaro." It was this paper's Sports banner story. Like the first one, the second was also not carried by the other newspapers.

A scoop?

Your answer is as acceptable as mine.

The first time I read it, I just smiled. I said to myself: "Is this a joke or something"?

The second time I read it, I re-studied my stand. I said to myself: "My oh my, they are serious."

Yes, fellas, you got it right. The MILF rebels in Mindanao, the ones fighting for, among other things, independence from this republic of 7,100 islands, are the anointed saviours of the Palaro slated May 4-11 in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. That is, if we believe what some people, like Robert Aventajado, are telling us.

I am just wondering: What's the word from President Macapagal-Arroyo, the final arbiter of the Palaro?

I guess we have really stooped down that low, or lost all sense of logic. The idea itself of entrusting into the hands of the MILF the fate of the Palaro is not only weird.

It is stupid thinking.

It is absurd.

It is the height of madness.

It's like saying Bush and Bin Laden can sit and talk about peace in Iraq's post-Saddam era.

It's like hearing Ate Glo say beheadings in Mindanao will end once the Abu Sayyaf tells her so–on the cell phone.

It's like seeing a wheelchair-bound person suddenly walk because Mike Velarde had ordered the person to walk, and then believing what Mike had said afterward: "The person was a cripple before I made him walk!"

Since when have we made a deal with the MILF?

This should be a first if –God forbid – it should push through at all.

Have we become that desperate in staging the Palaro as scheduled that we will do away with security concerns and court wholesale carnage in Tubod? Have the lives of some 5,000 or so athletes bound for the Palaro become that cheap? Or are we simply taking them for granted?

How low can we get.

Look, at least three regions have said from the very start that they will not join this year's Palaro, one of them being powerhouse Metro Manila. We ignored their reason before, but this time, I guess we will have to take heed. Security, we now learn from them, is non-negotiable. Like a medal for valor, it is not for sale.

At the start, I had strongly supported the staging of the Palaro in Tubod. But then came the firefights between the MILF and government forces just days ago not far from Tubod, killing at least 16 people and injuring many others.

Hey, we are not a bunch of dogmas here, inflexible to the ways of the world, to the signs of the times.

The threat is for real: As in the specter of a SARS plague, people could die in Tubod while the Palaro is on. A terrorist bent on wreaking havoc on anyone, anywhere, is capable of doing it anywhere, anytime. Or do I have to remind you again of the New York Twin Towers disaster of 9/11? That when nobody was looking, the terrorists struck America, the world's supposed bastion of might, killing no less than 3,000 civilians?

Please, we don't want to hear anymore of that oft-repeated bull: We told you so.

So please, cut that crap, fellers. What are you a bunch of jerks?

If at all, the thought of the MILF being the key to the success of the Palaro can only be the work of the devil. That is even treasonous as that is tantamount to surrendering to the rebels the government's main job of securing the safety of our people, the athletes included.

Trusting the word of the MILF is even worse than sealing a pact with the devil. For, if we do that, we become devils ourselves and next commit the act of virtually flushing the souls of our 5,000 athletes or so down the drain.

Fact or fiction?

You tell me.

Agassi prevails

HOUSTON, Texas—Andre Agassi celebrated his new status as world No. 1 by coming from behind to beat Andy Roddick 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the US Clay Court Championships final on Sunday.

Agassi, the top seed, trailed by a set and a break but rallied to win his fourth title of 2003 and 58th of his career, moving him above Romanian Ilie Nastase to number seven on the all-time list.

"It's already been a great year and it's getting better," Agassi said after his fourth career win in as many matches against fellow American Roddick, winner of the US Clay Court Championships the past two years.

- In Brussels, Belgium, the world's top three female players did the job Sunday as the United States and Belgium cruised into the Fed Cup quarterfinals Sunday.

Serena and Venus Williams, ranked first and third in the world, respectively, gave the United States a 5-0 win over the Czech Republic, while No. 2 Kim Clijsters helped Belgium to a 5-0 sweep of Austria. *Reuters*

Fred Couples a winner again

HUMBLE, Texas—Fred Couples outdueled Mark Calcavecchia and held off challenges from Stuart Appleby and Hank Kuehne to win for the first time in five years, shooting a 5-under 67 Sunday to take the Houston Open by four strokes.

The 43-year-old Couples, looking like the golfer who was dominant in the 1990s, led or shared the lead the first three days.

Three consecutive birdies starting at the 14th hole paved the way for his 15th victory overall and first since the Memorial Tournament in 1998.

He finished with a flourish with a birdie on the 18th to finish at 21-under 267, then broke into tears.

- In Stockbridge, Georgia, Se Ri Pak defeated Shani Waugh on the fourth playoff hole to win the Chick-fil-A Charity Championship, the South Korean's second victory of the year and 20th of her career.

Fil-Am Dorothy Delasin and Filipino Jennifer Rosales finished in an eight-way tie at 214. Delasin closed with a 75 and Rosales 73. Each won $5,532.

- In Savannah, Georgia, Bruce Lietzke made par on the last 10 holes to win the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf for his first Champions Tour victory of the season.
- In Costa Adeje, Canary Islands, England's Kenneth Ferrie won the Spanish Open for his first European tour title, beating Ireland's Peter Lawrie and Sweden's Peter Hedblom on the second playoff hole.

Spanish amateur Pablo Martin, a co-leader after three rounds, finished at 271. *AP*

onstage

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(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	BOLD STAR
2	PUNLA

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT Araneta Center MALL CINEPLEX 7

tel 911.3101 loc. 821.8242.8400

1	EQUILIBRIUM
2	A MAN APART
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ANGER MANAGEMENT
4 (SDDS)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
5 (DTS)	PHONE BOOTH
6	JUNGLE BOOK 2
7	WHAT A GIRL WANTS

FarmersPlaza CINEMAS

tel 911.3101 loc. 821/8242/8400

1	A MAN APART
2	BOLD STAR

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall

(Sta. Rosa Laguna)

TEL. (049) 837-0826

1	BOLD STAR
2	VIRGIN PEOLPLE
3 (DTS)	JOHNNY ENGLISH

Cinema 2000 Waltermart

(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	KANGAROO JACK
2 (DTS)	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
3 (DOLBY)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
4	ANGER MANAGEMENT

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall

(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
2 (DOLBY)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
3 (DTS)	PHONE BOOTH
4	ANGER MANAGEMENT

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix

(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	THE RECRUIT
2	SEX DRIVE
3 (DOLBY)	THE CORE
4	

Cinema 2000 MetroTown

(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	THE CORE
2	THE RECRUIT
3 (DOLBY)	RING-2
4	JUST MARRIED

Magic Star Cinema

(Tarlac City) tel (045) 611.4305

1 (DOLBY)	JUST MARRIED
2 (DTS)	THE CORY QUIRINO STORY
3	THE RECRUIT

Lianas Cinema

(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	JAILBIRD
2	BOLD STAR
3 (DTS)	BATANG MAGDALENA
4	PUNLA

Lianas MovieCity

(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	ANGER MANAGEMENT
2	BOLD STAR
3 (DTS)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
4	PHONE BOOTH
5	WILLARD

Olivarez Tri-Cinema

(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	BOLD STAR
3	VIRGIN PEOLE

Olivarez Los Baños

tel (049) 249.2558

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
3	BOLD STAR

Mega Center Mall

(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1	SOLARIS
2	JUST MARRIED
3 (DTS)	THE CORE
4	THE RECRUIT

Cabuyao

(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808

1 (DTS)	RESERVE
2	RESERVE

Emperor

(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	DREAMCATCHER
2	VIRGIN PEOPLE
3	RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall

(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	THE CORE
2	THE RECRUIT
3	KANGAROO JACK
4	THE EYE

Jade Cinema

(Angeles City) tel (045)887-5001 TO 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	ANGER MANAGEMENT
2	RING-2
3 (DTS ES)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
4	SOLARIS

Cine Nepo Mall

(Angeles City) te (045) 887-0121

1	KANGAROO JACK
2	ANGER MANAGEMENT
3 (DOLBY)	SOLARIS
4	JOHNNY ENGLISH

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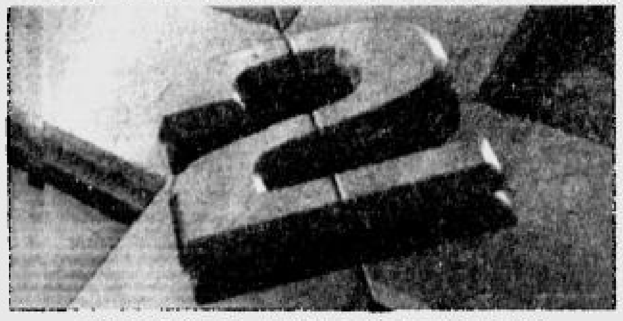
FESTIVAL CINEMA

Level 4

Festival Supermall

Filinvest - Alabang

Tel. 85036-71 to 72



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SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie Tel. 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY BACOOR

4173868

1	PUNLA
2	JUNGLE BOOK 2
3	A MAN APART
4	JOHNNY ENGLISH
5	EQUILIBRIUM
6	BOLDSTAR
7	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
8	ANGER MANAGEMENT

SM CENTERPOINT

7149522 -7161416

1	A MAN APART
2	BOLDSTAR
3	EQUILIBRIUM
4	PUNLA
5	JOHNNY ENGLISH
6	JUNGLE BOOK 2
7	ANGER MANAGEMENT
8	THE CORE
9	PHONE BOOTH
10	WHAT A GIRL WANTS

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

9350749

1	JUNGLE BOOK 2
2	PHONE BOOTH
3	KANGAROO JACK
4	EQUILIBRIUM
5	JOHNNY ENGLISH
6	BOLDSTAR
7	A MAN APART
8	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
9	ANGER MANAGEMENT
10	THE CORE
11	SEX DRIVE
12	PUNLA

SM CITY MANILA

5239240

1	A MAN APART
2	ANGER MANAGEMENT
3	JOHNNY ENGLISH
4	JOHNNY ENGLISH
5	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
6	PHONE BOOTH
7	PUNLA
8	SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE
9	EQUILIBRIUM
10	THE CORE
11	JUNGLE BOOK 2
12	BOLDSTAR

SM MEGAMALL

6331901 • 6329401

1	THE CORE
2	PHONE BOOTH
3	EQUILIBRIUM
4	JOHNNY ENGLISH
5	ANGER MANAGEMENT
6	JUNGLE BOOK 2
7	PUNLA
8	JOHNNY ENGLISH
9	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
10	A MAN APART
11	SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE
12	BOLDSTAR

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

9295452

1	EQUILIBRIUM
2	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
3	PUNLA
4	BOLDSTAR
5	JUNGLE BOOK 2
6	ANGER MANAGEMENT
7	SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE
8	JOHNNY ENGLISH

SM SOUTHMALL

8066888

1	SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE
2	JUNGLE BOOK 2
3	A MAN APART
4	ANGER MANAGEMENT
5	PUNLA
6	PHONE BOOTH
7	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
8	JOHNNY ENGLISH
9	EQUILIBRIUM
10	BOLDSTAR

SM CITY CEBU

2313876

1	THE RECRUIT
2	JOHNNY ENGLISH
3	KANGAROO JACK
4	BOLDSTAR
5	FINAL DESTINATION 2
6	SEX & ZEN 2
7	NATIONAL SECURITY
8	EQUILIBRIUM

SM CITY ILOILO

3209422

1	JUST MARRIED
2	CLOSED
3	WILD THORNBERRYS MOVIE
4	NATIONAL SECURITY
5	SOLARIS
6	JOHNNY ENGLISH
7	CLOSED
8	BOLDSTAR

SM CITY PAMPANGA

7128015

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	ANGER MANAGEMENT
3	SOLARIS
4	BOLDSTAR
5	WILLARD
6	KANGAROO JACK

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT

8294975

1	BOLDSTAR
2	JOHNNY ENGLISH
3	A MAN APART
4	WHAT A GIRL WANTS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN

2514302

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	PUNLA
3	A MAN APART
4	BOLDSTAR

SM CITY DAVAO

2976998

1	EQUILIBRIUM
2	JUST MARRIED
3	FINAL DESTINATION 2
4	SOLARIS
5	NATIONAL SECURITY
6	JOHNNY ENGLISH

SM BICUTAN

776-3055

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	BOLDSTAR
3	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
4	A MAN APART

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

859-2884

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH
2	WILD THORNBERRYS MOVIE
3	KANGAROO JACK
4	NATIONAL SECURITY

THE PODIUM CINEMA

18 ADB Avenue Ortigas Center Mandaluyong City

633-6976

1	JOHNNY ENGLISH 10:30 FS/11:00 MF/1:00/3:00/5:00/7:00/9:00/10:25 LFS/11:00 LMF/12:25 END
2	ANGER MANAGEMENT 11:15 FS/11:45 MF/2:00/4:15/6:30/8:45/10:35 LFS/11:00 LMF/12:50 END

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632- 9115- 16

633- 7641 loc. 279

THX	JOHNY ENGLISH 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00 LMF, 9:30 END
2	JOHNY ENGLISH
3	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
4	EQUILIBRIUM
5	ANGER MANAGEMENT
6	PHONE BOOTH
7	JUNGLE BOOK 2
8	SHADOW OF VAMPIRE
9	A MAN APART
10	BOLD STAR

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Ermita

536 -7809- 12

1	JOHNY ENGLISH
2	JUNGLE BOOK2
3	SHADOW OF VAMPIRE
4	BOLD STAR
5	ANGER MANAGEMENT
6	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
7	A MAN APART

Metro East - Marcos hway

682- 8193 / 8280

1	JUNGLE BOOK 2
2	A MAN APART
3	JOHNY ENGLISH
4	EQUILIBRIUM
5	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
6	ANGER MANAGEMENT
7	PHONE BOOTH
8	BOLD STAR

Novaliches

935- 3229 - 30

1	EQUILIBRIUM
2	PHONE BOOTH
3	A MAN APART
4	JOHNY ENGLISH
5	ANGER MANAGEMENT
6	JUNGLE BOOK 2
7	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
8	BOLD STAR

Malabon Citisquare

288-0985 / 288-2575

1	BOLD STAR
2	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
3	JOHNY ENGLISH
4	PUNLA

Star Mills- Sn. Fernando, Pamp.

(045)875-1927

(045)961-5270

1	WALANG KAPALIT
2	BOLD STAR
3	ANGER MANAGEMENT
4	JOHNY ENGLISH
5	SOLARIS
6	EQUILIBRIUM

Imus

471- 8188 / 875- 3838

1	A MAN APART
2	JUNGLE BOOK 2
3	BOLD STAR
4	ANGER MANAGEMENT
5	PUNLA
6	JOHNY ENGLISH

Sta. Rosa Laguna

(049)837-0907

1	BOLD STAR
2	JOHNY ENGLISH
3	ANGER MANAGEMENT
4	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
5	NATIONAL SECURITY

Bacolod

441- 0453 / 0459

1	JOHNY ENGLISH
2	JUST MARRIED
3	NATIONAL SECURITY
4	WILD THORNBERRY
5	EQUILIBRIUM
6	SEX DRIVE

Iloilo

336- 8077 - 78

1	JOHNY ENGLISH
2	JUST MARRIED
3	NATIONAL SECURITY
4	SOLARIS
5	BOLD STAR
6	WILD THORNBERRY

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

FAP winner Tirazona dies of cardiac arrest

From page A27

the Philippines (FAP).

Before he died, he was working on the scripts of "The Luis Taruc Story" and "Bataan: The Death March" for Calinauan Cine Works, which also produced the controversial "Lapu-Lapu."

His wife said he had no known illness. She said he had been a heavy smoker since he was 17 "but he quit two years ago."

She said she left for work at about 7 a.m. Thursday while Tirazona was still asleep. Two hours later, one of their daughters called to say he had been found dead in bed.

Tirazona's body lies in state in Chapel H of Funeraria Paz on Araneta Avenue in Quezon City. His remains will be cremated tomorrow, April 30, at 9 p.m.

Tirazona is also survived by daughters Trisha, Lenny, Jennifer, Sharon, Melizza, Kristina and son Jeffrey.

In the '70s, he also directed action movies.

Marinel R. Cruz

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	BALAT SIBUYAS / TRI-SEVENTEEN
ODEON	BOLDSTAR
ODEON-2	HAYOP SA SEX APPEAL/ BATAS ANG UUSIG
ROBEN	PUNLA
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	HARRY POTTER / THEY
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	PUNLA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	PUNLA
REMAR	BOLDSTAR
REMAR-2	PUNLA
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	PUNLA
B	BOLD STAR
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
CINEMA-2	THE JUNGLE BOOK 2
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KASIPING
CINEMA-2	BOLDSTAR
CINEMA-3	PUNLA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	PHONE BOOTH
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	KANGAROO JACK
CINEMA-6	SEX DRIVE
CINEMA-7	THE CORE
CINEMA-8	KAULAYAW
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ANGER MANAGEMENT
CINEMA-11(SDDS)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
CINEMA-12	A MAN APART
CINEMA-14	EQUILIBRIUM
CINEMA-15	JUNGLE BOOK 2
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LNE
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

POWER PLANT
CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

JUNGLE BOOK 2 GP 12:00,1:40,3:20,5:00, 6:30,8:10,9:50	ANGER MANAGEMENT R13 1:20,3:35,5:50, 8:05,10:20	JOHNNY ENGLISH P13 12:10, 2:10, 4:10, 6:10, 8:10, 10:10
PHONE BOOTH R13 12:35, 2:30, 4:25, 6:20, 8:15,10:10	SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE R18 12:00,2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00,10:00	WHAT A GIRL WANTS GP 1:10, 3:20

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

THEATRE MALL
GREENHILLS
a landmark reinvented!
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 1 JOHNNY ENGLISH
11:10, 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00
P13
CINEMA 2 ANGER MANAGEMENT
12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40
GP
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.
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Piolo Pascual
Till There Was You
Directed by. Bb. Joyce Bernal

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A Star Cinema 10th Year Anniversary Presentation
I have been waiting for so long. It was you all along.
Ronaldo Valdez Gina Pareño Pen Medina Marissa Delgado
Jennifer Sevilla Gerald Madrid Angel Jacob and Matet de Leon

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Piolo Pascual
Till There Was You
Directed by: Bb. Joyce Bernal
LEONARDO Bags
Pacific Blue SHADES
STAR CINEMA

Text YOU and send to 2366

MTRCB RATING ➤ PG 13 | Children below 13 years old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
THE TIME HAS COME
FOR THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT
TO STAND UNITED.

X-MEN 2
MARVEL

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW!

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW!

The BESTSELLING SEX COLUMN
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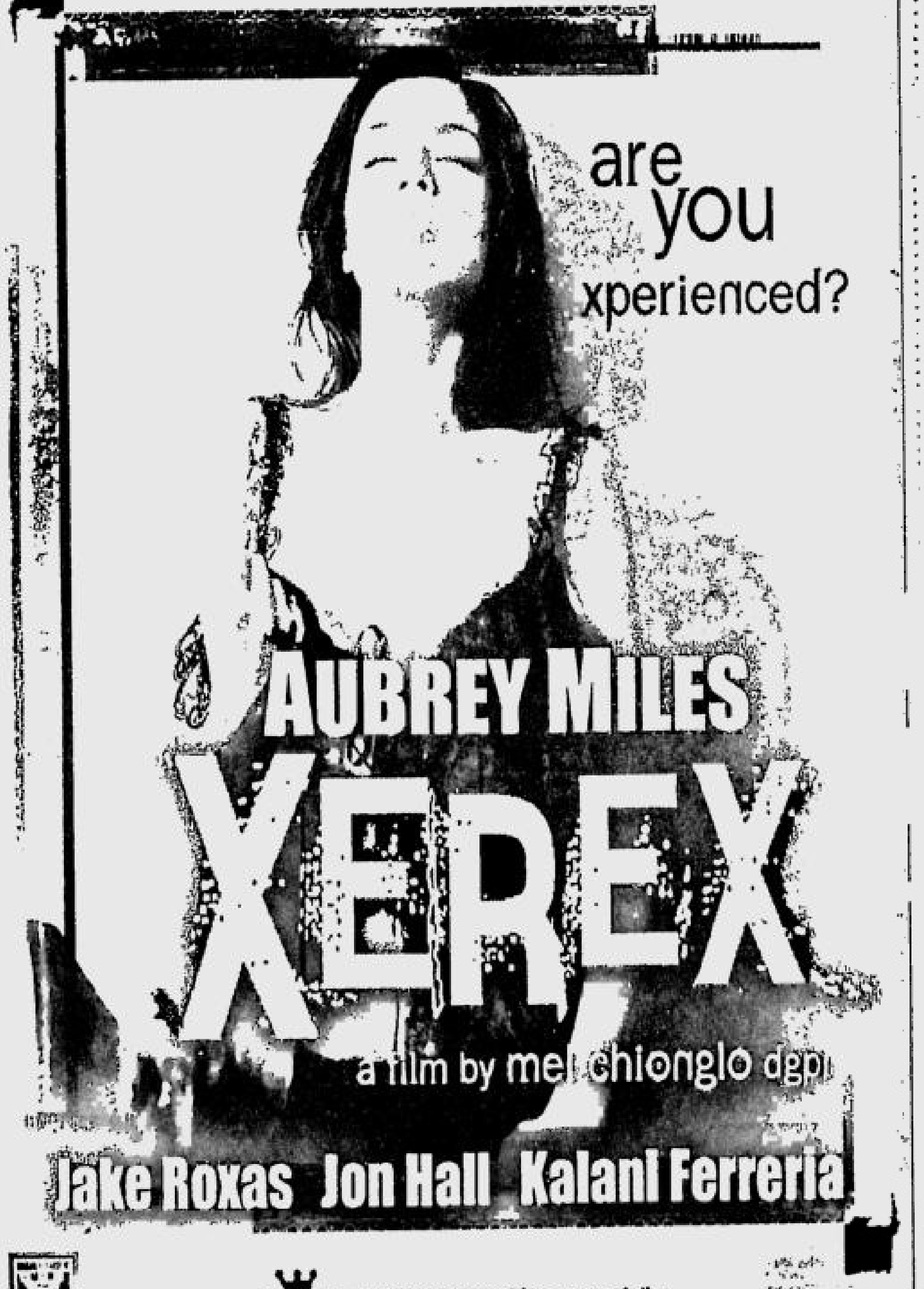
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XEREX
a film by mel chionglo dgpi
Jake Roxas Jon Hall Kalani Ferreria

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'Taken' on Star Movies this July

FOR the first time, Star Movies will be showing a mini-series starting this July. Why the shift in programming? Simply because the mini-series, "Taken," is too good to pass up: It's executive-produced by no less than Mr. Movies himself, **Steven Spielberg**!

"Taken" is an epic, 10-episode series produced by DreamWorks SKG, which spent $40 million to make it a thrilling viewing experience.

It is an alien abduction saga set against the backdrop of actual events, and further pumped up by spectacular visual effects. It weaves together the stories of three families over many generations, focusing on the crucial role they've played in the history of alien abductions.

Despite the fact that "Taken" is an epic, Spielberg strongly believes that it should also be a "character story" in which compelling characters evolve, age and in turn give birth to special children who themselves have a purpose in the unfolding story.

"Taken" was nominated for best mini-series at the 2003 Golden Globe Awards, and was a huge hit last year on American cable television. It was the best ever rated show on the Sci Fi Channel in the US.

SPIELBERG

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

'Guyana Plants'

STARTING May 4, "Adventure Starts Here with Toyota" will be screened every Sunday at 7 p.m. on the National Geographic Channel.

For starters, watch "Guyana Plants" on May 4 and meet **Matt** and **Jo** as they travel to Guyana to unravel what appears to be a medical mystery. There, they meet local botanist **Suroj Tiwari**, who's passionate about medicinal plants.

Suroj is convinced that Guyana potentially holds a vast resource of new medicines, but it is being threatened by the forces of change.

He zeroes in on a special tree that may hold the key to curing a disease that affects millions of people around the world, if an active chemical could be produced from it. But, is time running out?

Feedback

FROM **Boy Blue P. Filomeno**, spokesperson of the Philippine Alliance Against Pornography: "We agree with you that some TV stations have deteriorated. But, not only do program haste 'hit their rivals with impunity,' they also discuss their guests and their own extramarital affairs, live-in partners, performance in lovemaking, etc.

"They use foul language, engage in gossip and foment intrigue. A mayor hosts a gossip show: If other government officials do this, what will happen to our country?

"Another show biz talk show host sneered, '*Kayong mga moralista, kayo ang nagkakalat ng dumi*. 'Look who's talking!

"The KBP's TV code doesn't allow illicit sexual relations or perversions to be presented as good or attractive. Neither does it countenance TV fare that degrades the ideals of family, unity and traditional values like mutual respect and trust, nor dialogue or action that is obscene, blasphemous or derogatory.

"We will bring these matters to the KBP for appropriate action."

New co-host for 'F'

STARTING last Saturday, ABS-CBN's magazine show, "F" has a new co-host joining **Angel Aquino** and **Daphne Oseña**. She's British-born commercial and ramp model **Amanda Griffin**.

For her part, Angel has been busy shooting a film with **Sharon Cuneta**. And Daphne is now the editor of the newly-launched Metro Weddings magazine.

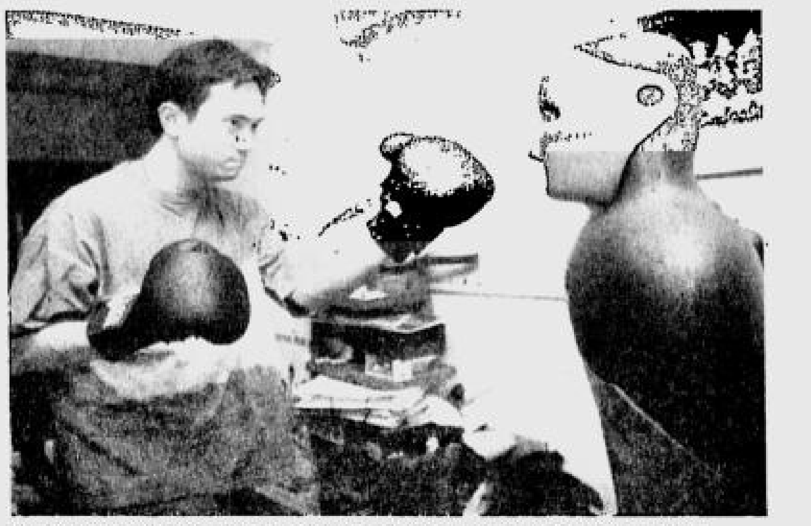
Bold stars all over TV

TIME was when sexy actors were limited to for-adult movies. These days, however, they're all over the TV screen: On morning shows, they are invited to talk about breast enlargement. On noontime shows, they gyrate in wee costumes.

On newscasts, they hurl charges at each other. On show biz talk shows, they engage in teapot tempests, and make mountains out of molehills–and dung heaps.

Why do TV shows love to feature them? Because they're sexy and don't mind their tongues–and manners.

But aren't minors watching? A lot some TV people care. Well, those kid's parents and teachers should care, and remind our TV workers of their responsibilities.



SLAM MAN is from an ex-girlfriend, who sold it to TJ "at a really discounted price."

TJ Manotoc's...

From page A27

worn it so many times the label has worn off. I think it's from Japs."

Favorite long sleeves. "It's from Tyler. I don't get to wear it too often because I find it too formal, but I really like it. My mom gave this to me last Christmas."

Favorite necktie. "This DKNY tie is the very first tie I ever bought. I bought this in the States to match the suit I wore at my sister's wedding."

Favorite basketball shorts. "It has got to be this original Michael Jordan shorts. Why? It's very rare."

Slam Man boxing dummy. "I bought this from my ex-girlfriend at a really discounted price. I want to do some boxing at home because I don't have time to go to the gym. It comes with a pair of gloves."

Bean bag o' jeans. "These jeans are clean, at least to my standards. On 'Unang Hirit,' I only wear them for three hours. I don't sweat so I wear them again."

Most memorable T-shirts. "I bought this Roscoe's T-shirt in L.A. My cousins and I love to eat at that restaurant whenever we're there. *Ang sarap do'n!* The second one is this blue Nike shirt, which is not at all spectacular but this is the only shirt my brothers ever bought for me in my whole life. *'Yung mga kuripot na yun!* They bought this in Singapore as a Christmas gift for me."

Most treasured baseball cap. "The two-year-old ESPN cap I bought in Chicago. There are only two ESPN shops in the States, and the other one is found in New York. So, again, this is a rare item."

Warner hosts Madonna party to launch album

SHOW TIME

MADONNA is back with her 10th studio album, "American Life" and Warner Music Philippines, with Gentxt, is throwing a huge party to celebrate the return of the influential music artist on April 30 At Acquario Liquid Lounge in Malate.

The party will kick things off at 9:30 p.m. with an open bar until 11 p.m. Fans who will show up in their best Madonna look–whether dressed up as the sensual '80s Material Girl, as Evita Peron or as the urban trendsetter of the '90s among her numerous incarnations–will win exciting prizes.

Madonna diehards can also look forward to the special screening of the controversial, unedited music video of "American Life."

The new Madonna album contains the lead single and title track, "American Life," which has immediately made its presence felt in the Billboard Hot 100 in the United States.

The 11-track album contains stuttering beats, acoustic guitar riffs and an in-your-face lyrical content that mirrors the legendary singer's artistic journey.

Melanie C finds a 'Reason'

"IT'S ME on a plate, pretty much."

This is how former Spice Girls member Melanie Chisholm a.k.a. Melanie C describes the content of "Reason," her second solo project and follow-up to 1999's multi-platinum album, "Northern Star."

"Reason" sees Melanie C in creative collaboration with such stellar names as Rick Nowels, Gregg Alexander, Tore Jhansson, Rhett Lawrence and Phil Thornalley.

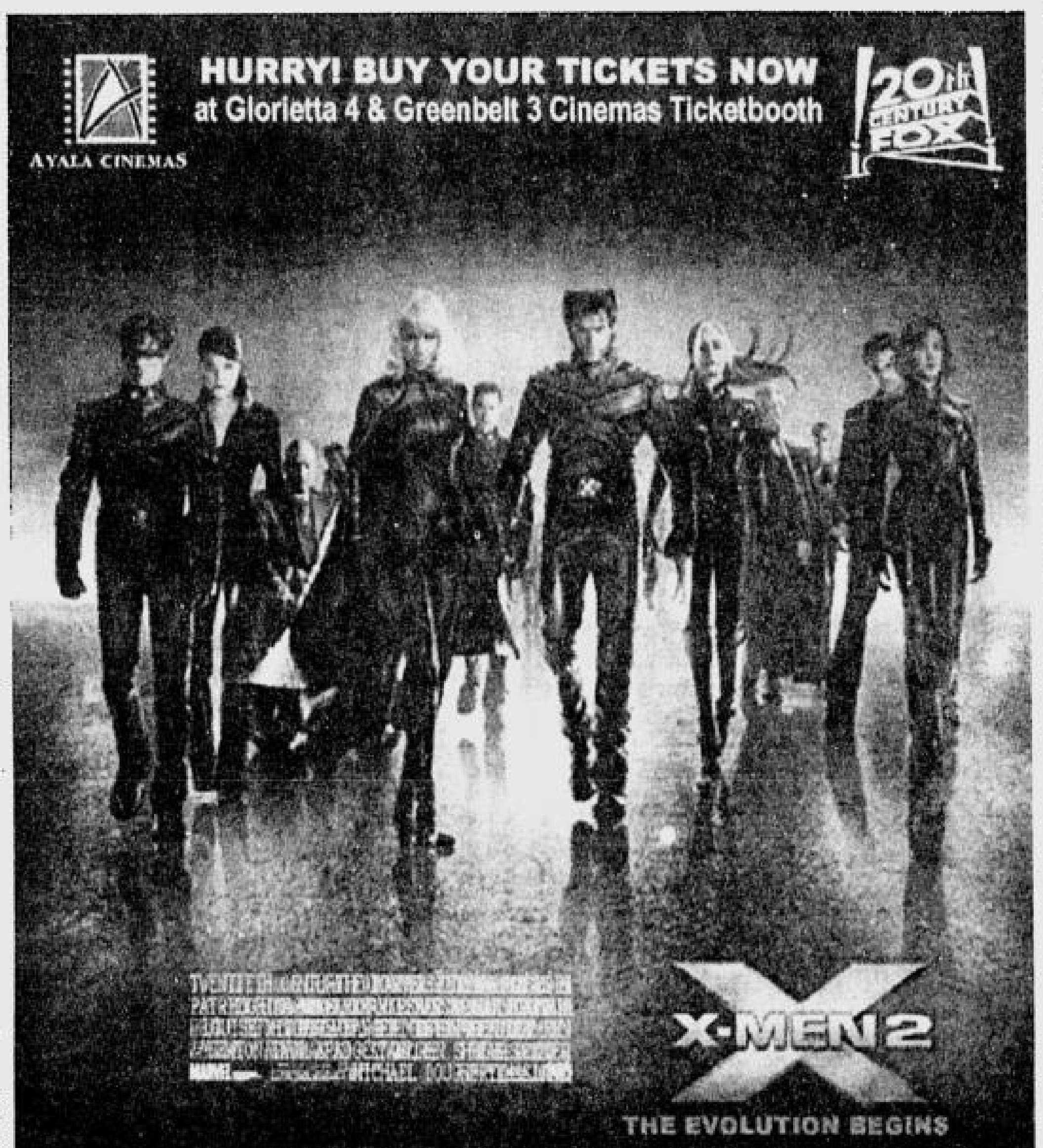
Rick, Gregg, Tore and Rhett also take production credits with Marius De Vries, Peter Vetesse, Pat McCarthy' Damien Le Gassick and Gary Clark.

First single culled from the album is the irresistible and insidious "Here It Comes Again." It's the aperitif to an album that is uplifting, insightful, exciting, energetic and reflective, all at one time.

"This album offers a pretty accurate reflection of who I am and where I'm at now," Melanie says. "It's generally positive, which is the way I'm trying to go these days."

"Reason" is released by EMI Music and is available in CD and cassette formats.

FORMER SPICE GIRL. Melanie C. displays warmth and maturity in new album.



HURRY! BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW at Glorietta 4 & Greenbelt 3 Cinemas Ticketbooth

AYALA CINEMAS

OPENS TOMORROW AT ALL
AYALA CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1 (formerly QUAD)
Cinema 3 - 12:55, 3:45, 6:35, 9:25
Cinema 4 - 10:40, 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

GLORIETTA 4
Cinema 1 - 1:05, 3:55, 6:45, 9:35
Cinema 2 - 10:50, 1:40, 4:30, 7:20, 10:10
Cinema 3 (THX/GSC) - 11:20, 2:10, 5:00, 7:50, 10:40
Cinema 5 - 12:00, 2:50, 5:40, 8:30, 11:20

GREENBELT 1
Cinema 2 - 12:05, 2:55, 5:45, 8:35

GREENBELT 3
Cinema 1 (THX / GSC) - 2:35, 5:30, 8:25, 11:20
Cinema 2 (THX / GSC) - 1:55, 4:50, 7:45, 10:40
Cinema 3 (GSC) - 12:20, 3:15, 6:10, 9:05, 12:00

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Cinema 1 (THX) - 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00
Cinema 2 - 12:15, 2:50, 5:25, 8:00, 10:35
Cinema 3 - 1:40, 4:15, 6:50, 9:25

Schedules are subject to change without prior notice.
MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13 (PG-13)

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Ali 2	A MAN APART
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Ali 4	JOHNNY ENGLISH
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Ali 6	JUNGLE BOOK 2
Ali 7	EQUILIBRIUM
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	A MAN APART
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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

Binibini losers' complaints 'silly, sour grapes'

"SILLY" and nothing but "sour grapes."

This is how the Binibining Pilipinas Charities Inc. described the complaints of some candidates in the latest Binibining Pilipinas contest that pageant organizers fed questions to the candidates hours, even a day, before the final pageant night started.

Binibining Pilipinas project director Ernesto Roca told INQUIRER Entertainment that the list of questions to be asked during the show proper were given to the organizers only a few hours before the pageant night, so there was not enough time to look at the questions and to reproduce them for the candidates.

Last week, some contestants in the 2003 Binibining Pilipinas pageant, which was held last month, had complained that they were given the pageant night questions hours before the show started last March 16. One contestant said some of them were given the questions a day before the pageant night.

"That's silly," was Roca's reaction in a phone interview last Friday. "Does that mean that candidates get the copies of questions ahead of us?

The complaining contestants said the distribution of the questions before coronation night was unfair. "Why did the pageant organizers add a percentage on intelligence in the criteria in the first place?" one contestant had asked.

Roca called candidates' complaints "sour grapes."

"If they are really smart, they don't need those questions to guide them," he said.

Roca explained that the questions were prepared not by the pageant organizers but by the show's producers, "to prevent a leakage of questions." GMA Network Inc. co-produced this year's pageant.

Roca said the organizers were tempted to distribute the questions to the contestants in the past, "but we never did. We didn't want to come out like that quiz show scandal in the 1950s."

Roca was apparently referring to the US quiz show "Twenty One" on CBS in the 1950s where it was eventually uncovered that producers hand-picked and coached contestants just hours before airtime.

"But come to think of it," Roca added, "there's really no correct answers to beauty pageant questions. It is simply a test of the confidence of the candidates when they answer questions."

Marinel R. Cruz

MR. SHOE-LY tries on one of his 30 pairs.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

TJ Manotoc's Jolina dolls, shorts and first-date shirts

By Marinel R. Cruz

OUT OF THE CLOSET

CELEBRITIES love to shop, right? Not when the celebrity is TV host and sportscaster TJ Manotoc, who has the distinction of being the very first luminary to allow INQUIRER Entertainment readers into his closet.

"I'm not really into shopping," he says. "But when I do shop, I use gift certificates given by friends. Plus, I buy only when it's super sale. I also get a lot of free stuff, especially clothes that I endorse."

TJ has filled all the closets of his unit at a Pasig City condominium with things he has collected since he moved out of his parents' Makati City house three years ago. The "Unang Hirit" host was only 23 when he decided to live alone, with no *yaya*, cook, or laundrywoman.

He says his closets contain mostly gifts from his dad, former basketball coach and golfer Tommy Manotoc, his mom, 1970 Miss International Aurora Pijuan, his brothers, ex-girlfriends, and friends–including Jolina dolls he received during a Kris Kringle game, and a shirt that he has worn to several "first dates."

TJ is no longer "the other Manotoc son" (remember half-brother Borgy?). He has come into his own, being the newest Bench model and a sportscaster covering the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) for Vintage TV. He is also a consultant of Manual men's magazine for Mega Magazine Publications Inc. (MMPI).

Look what came out of the closet of TJ:

Most prized possession. "A new 34-inch Phillips TV that, if coupled with a progressive scanned DVD player, can give you view of the clearest DVD pictures."

Most proud of. "A pair of Muai Thai boxer shorts and gloves I got from Thailand. The gloves don't fit me, although the shorts do, so I just put them on display."

Jolina dolls. "They're gifts I got from the 2001 and 2002 Kris Kringle at the Mega Magazine office. I intend to have them signed by Jolens (Jolina Magdangal, who inspired the dolls). They're still in their boxes because 10 years from now, they'll be collector's items."

Michael Jordan posters. "They're rare! I got them from the States. I have not painted the walls of my unit. I hate the wallpaper so I cover them with Jordan posters."

Samurai sword. "I got this from Thailand, too. I don't travel a lot but I see to it that I keep things that will remind me of the places I've visited."

Favorite suit. "I've had this suit since 1999. Luckily, it still fits me. This was made by Paolo Basa for the wedding of my sister Mavis. I like wearing suits. Feeling *ko mas may pogi points ka kapag naka*-suit *ka.*"

Second most favorite suit. "This is Hugo Boss. I wore this at the Binibining Pilipinas pageant that I hosted last March. *Maraming nagsasabi na bagay sa akin.*"

Favorite short-sleeved shirt. "It's from U2. I like wearing white. I love this shirt because of the fabric, half-linen, half-cotton. I like the way it falls on me. I've worn this many times on first dates and when I have to look cute *pero hindi naman sobrang pa-porma. Nakatatlong* first dates *na yata 'yan. Pero mukhang malas eh.*"

Second favorite short sleeves. "I bought this from Cinderella. It feels very comfortable. I've

TJ/A27

FIT to a T, TJ's favorite t-shirts are from an L. A. resto and a gift from his brothers, the only one they ever bought him in his "whole life."

FOR DISPLAY only

KITSCH now, collector's items later, TJ says of his Jolina dolls, here nestling alongside his portrait.

FAP winner Tirazona dies of cardiac arrest

THURSDAY night, director and scriptwriter Jerry Tirazona complained to his wife Alma he had difficulty sleeping because he could not stand the heat in their room. Alma said she ignored the complaint and told him the whole country was experiencing the same high temperature.

The next morning, April 25, Tirazona's children found him dead in bed at their house in Lagro, Quezon City. Doctors at the St. Lorenzo Hospital in Quezon City said he died of cardiac arrest. He was 62.

Tirazona's screenplay for William Mayo's "Lapu Lapu" won for him a best screenplay award from the recent Film Academy of

FAP/A25

Mr. Hearththrob wears floral boxer shorts

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

JULIUS Babao is one of the few true gentlemen I've met in the biz.

It is said that anyone who takes care of pets very well is really a kind soul. No wonder Julius is such a dog lover. He and fiancée **Tin-Tin Bersola** treat their dogs like babies. That should give them enough practice as they will be tying the knot next year and will surely have adorable little ones.

True to his word, Julius called me up immediately after finalizing talks with his ABS-CBN bosses regarding his next career move. He told me, "I will be Korina Sanchez's co-anchor on 'TV Patrol' starting April 28. And soon I will have my own radio show and also do stories for 'The Correspondents.'"

Kudos to you, buddy! You have truly come full circle.

Chin-Chin the heroine

DAYS after I wrote about **Chin-Chin Gutierrez** in a previous column, I saw Time magazine's special issue on Asian Heroes (April 28, 2003) with Chin-Chin on the cover. She was featured because of her tireless projects for Mother Earth Foundation. The Time cover reads, "They made a difference as they made us proud." As I listened to her lament about the state of our environment, I could tell she was not just paying lip service. She suggested, "We should all plant a tree on our birthday. Some may find that odd but in the long run our children's children will benefit from it."

We salute you, Chin-Chin. If only they could, I bet all the trees will bend in your honor.

Guess list

WHO IS this matinee idol who went to a spa with an equally good-looking dramatic actor? Since the spa is not too commercialized (it's located in a modest barrio), they probably opted to go there to have more privacy. Naturally, the staff members of the spa were thrilled to see the heartthrob and the hunk but they were instantly turned off because Mr. Matinee Idol was such a snob, although the dramatic actor was quite chummy with them. One masseuse lamented, "I used to be a big fan of Mr. Heartthrob but not anymore. *Napakasuplado!* Imagine, I ran to the nearest grocery store to buy a new pair of shorts for him to use during his massage but he refused to wear it. I was shocked when he took off his pants. He was wearing yellow floral boxer shorts!"

The two actors stayed in the steam room together and had their massage in the "couple's room." The spa employees are now inclined to believe the rumor that Mr. Matinee Idol is indeed gay. Nothing wrong with that, but he's not man enough to admit it.

***

Who is this sexy young star who's now living in with a singer, who in turn has a love child with a dramatic actress? Her mom is on the verge of being suicidal because she refuses to come back home. Ms Sexy Thing happens to be the family breadwinner. But now that her world revolves around Mr. Crooner, she often suffers from "amnesia" when it comes to family obligations. Maybe she got tired of working so hard for her family that when she met the singer (who knows how to pamper his women), she realized what she's missing. She's only 18 so she should enjoy her youth instead of being saddled with solely providing for her family. Her launching movie is now in the works. Hopefully her being in love won't make her lose focus in her career.

***

Who is this pretty newcomer who's a certified kleptomaniac? This is why the newcomer, who has a love child with an assistant director of a soap, was fired from a sitcom. She is said to have taken the cell phones, accessories etc. of her co-stars. Her modus operandi: She will befriend you and then she will start borrowing your clothes, jewelry, perfume etc. When you ask for your stuff back, she comes up with lame excuses, like the items have been stolen or broken. What a pity because she's really got such an angelic face. Too bad she's more like a fallen or a black angel.

For feedback, e-mail friends_at_dsquare@yahoo.com or jaimealsan@yahoo.com

DID YOU KNOW...

While **Dina Bonnevie** was filming **Jose Javier Reyes'** "Anghel sa Lupa" last year, young actor **Cogie Domingo**, who plays her son in the movie, would frequent Dina's their house in Ayala Heights, Quezon City. Cogie is a good friend of Dina's daughter **Danica**, so when the young actor feels low or needs someone to talk to, he goes to Danica's house and even stays late at night. Dina often prepares pizza and pasta for her "kids." Cogie was once punched by Dina's son, Oyo Boy, over **Anne Curtis**, who is Oyo Boy's girlfriend.

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Henna Tattoo Tents
Free Diving/Snorkling

May 3

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ADB: Asia to remain bright spot despite SARS

By Michelle V. Remo

DESPITE the presence of the SARS epidemic in the region, the Asian Development Bank said its 41 member-economies, including the Philippines, would still be the world's economic bright spot with their economies growing by 5.3 percent this year and 5.9 percent in 2004.

For the whole of Asia, the ADB said the economic impact of SARS was projected to slash about 0.1 or 0.2 percent of gross domestic product growth, factoring in the effects of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak on the economies of China, Hong Kong and Singapore where a high level of SARS incidence had been recorded.

For this year, the ADB said it expected East Asia to grow 5.6 percent; Southeast Asia, 4 percent; South Asia, 5.7 percent; Central Asia 5.8 percent and the Pacific, 2.4 percent. The figures are comparatively higher than the projected 1.5- to 1.7-percent growth in industrial countries, including the United States, Japan and the European Union.

The ADB attributes its growth forecast for Asia to an increase in domestic demand, sustained export growth and supportive macroeconomic policies.

Crouch said the ADB has already disregarded the US-Iraq war as a possible impediment to Asia's growth, saying oil prices were expected to soften within the next two years.

The ADB expects the Philippine economy to grow 4 percent this year and 4.5 percent next year, citing an improved export performance and an increase in domestic consumption as key factors.

Although the figures were slightly lower than last year's 4.6-percent growth in gross domestic product and the government's 2003 GDP growth projections of 4.2 to 5.2 percent, the ADB said in a press conference yesterday that the forecast was still a sign of robust growth and predicted that the country would regain economic output levels prior to the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

The ADB admitted that the possible effects of the SARS scare was not yet factored in the Philippine forecast, saying the extent to which SARS would impact on the local economy was still undetermined.

"Right now, we are still at the stage of crystal ball gazing as to how much would be the economic effects of SARS on a per-country basis, but the effects would depend on factors including the duration (of the existence of the SARS virus) and a country's economic structure, meaning how important is the role played by the tourism sector," said Thomas Crouch, ADB Philippines country director.

Crouch also said that contrary to negative perception, the ADB remained optimistic the SARS scare would not impact much on the flow of overseas remittances to the Philippines.

"The amendments to the Amla (Anti-Money Laundering Act) that are consistent with the requirements of FATF (Financial Action Task Force) have been put in place, so the impediment (of FATF sanctions to the entry of remittances) has been removed. At the moment, we don't see any major impact of SARS on the flow of overseas remittances," Crouch added.

Meralco seen overcoming refund woes

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MANILA Electric Co. is expected to "be in a financially sound position" despite the difficulties it faces due to a multibillion-peso refund ordered by the Supreme Court, according to the Asian Development Bank's local chief.

ADB country chair Thomas Crouch said in a media briefing that this was the bank's initial assessment when the high court's decision came out in November.

"We may have to redo our calculations based on different scenarios on how the court's order would be played out," Crouch said. "We will know ultimately when a mode of refund has been (finally) adopted."

The Department of Energy is expected to host today a meeting among Meralco stakeholders, consumer groups and the Energy Regulatory Commission to find a way to implement the refund.

Crouch said the ADB has lent to Meralco a total of $125 million, of which $100 million has not been paid.

"The loan has been fully disbursed, but Meralco's amortization repayment is until 2012," the ADB official said.

He said that the ADB, as a lender, had no position on how to implement the refund nor has Meralco solicited its recommendation on the matter.

Last April 15, Meralco president Jesus Francisco said the utility would not be able to refund all of its customers within a year due to its financial difficulties.

Meralco lawyers had subsequently asked the Supreme Court to order only a year's worth of refund instead of the nine years since it started collecting the overcharges in 1994.

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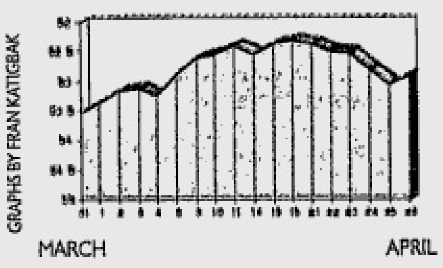

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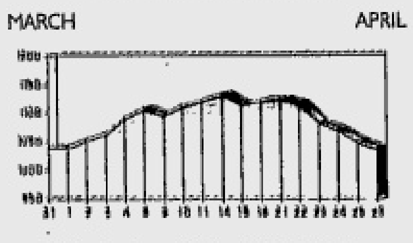
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



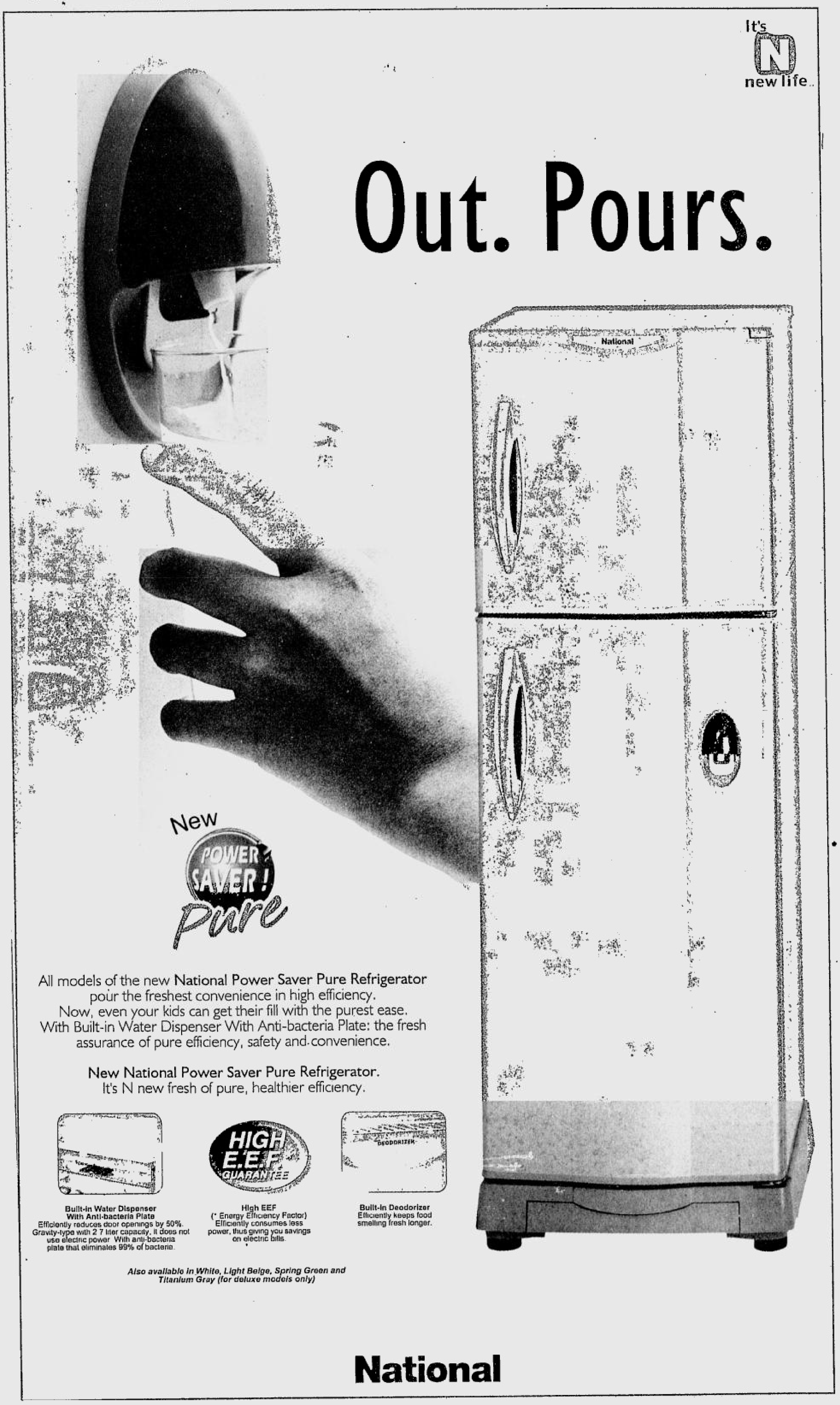
(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks hit month's low on SARS jitters

STOCKS ended at their lowest mark in a month as fears about the impact of SARS on Asian economies prompted investors to exit the market again, traders said yesterday.

The main index finished down 1.25 percent, or 13.10 points, at 1,036.29, its lowest close since March 27 and its fifth successive session fall. Turnover reached P324.51 million with just nine advancers, 45 decliners and 30 stocks unmoved.

"It's really sentiment driven. We've broken several major support levels recently, and there are growing fears that Inter-Asian trade and economic activity will be effected by the SARS outbreak," said Manny Cruz, an analyst at Belson Securities. *Reuters*



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National

Business proposes 'no strike, no lockout' provision in CBAs

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE CLAMOR for a strike moratorium has snowballed with the Employers Confederation of the Philippines Inc. (Ecop) proposing to insert a "no strike, no lockout" provision in future pacts between management and labor.

Ecop president Donald Dee said this provision would "instill stability in the country's industrial relations system by maximizing existing mechanisms." He said the no strike clause should be complemented by government efforts to deal with the labor disputes "decisively and expeditiously."

Ecop apparently wanted to enforce the strike moratorium through the CBAs after the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Labor and Employment cited the unconstitutionality of such a ban on worker's rights to hold mass actions.

Dee has also proposed the revival of a social accord between management and labor reached during the economic and political crisis two to three years ago wherein businesses agreed to hold off layoffs while the labor unions agreed to hold off protest actions.

The 10-year ban on strike was proposed by Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. president Robin Sy. It was supported by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and the Filipino-Indian Chamber of Commerce (Philippines) Inc.

These business groups claimed that their members would invest more and create more jobs if only they were assured that their plans would not be derailed by labor strikes. FFCCCI alone has promised to create 3 million jobs in the near term with a 10-year strike ban in place. Labor unions naturally greeted the plan with derision.

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which echoed the concerns on rising labor activism in the country, has agreed to hold a discussion between business groups and labor unions to thresh out mutually acceptable solutions to the labor unrest problem.

PCCI president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said: "The PCCI recognizes the very bad perception of investors about the difficulty in managing workers. This negative image is a severe blow to efforts by both the government and the private sector in promoting the Philippines as haven for investors."

He said that unless this bad perception on the country's labor sector was removed, unemployment could rise as less capital would come in to create new jobs.

SM Prime allots ₱15B for 3-year expansion

SM PRIME Holdings Inc. is earmarking P15 billion for capital expenditures in the next three years to pursue the establishment of new malls nationwide.

At the same time, company data showed the retail giant posted an 11-percent to 12-percent rise in revenue in the first quarter and a 10-percent to 12-percent increase in profit from year-ago level.

In a briefing with reporters following its annual stockholders' meeting yesterday, SM Prime senior vice president for operations Hans Sy said that out of the P15 billion, over P4 billion was earmarked for the completion of malls in Baguio, Lucena in Quezon and Marilao in Bulacan this year as well as for land acquisition.

Portion of the amount earmarked will be used to fund the construction of the Mall of Asia near Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

SM Prime's board also approved the declaration of a 10-centavo regular cash dividend and a 2.5 centavo special cash dividend. *Elena R. Torrijos*

Manufacturing output grew 1.8% in Feb.

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S manufacturing output, in terms of volume, grew 1.8 percent in February from year-ago level in the second straight month of expansion after a long period of decline, the National Statistics Office said yesterday.

The rate of growth in February was, however, lower than the 3.7 percent expansion registered in January.

The expansion was registered mainly in basic metals, wood and wood products, leather products, non-metallic mineral products, textile, beverage, food manufacturing, furniture and fixtures, and petroleum products, the NSO added.

On a monthly basis, the NSO said production volume increased 1.4 percent in February from the January level.

Manufacturing output, in terms of value, posted an 11.4-percent year-on-year increase in February. The rate of growth, however, was also lower than the 12.8 percent registered in January. Sales value, meanwhile, rose 17.5 percent year-on-year.

The higher growth in production value was mainly due to the increase in the prices of basic metals, leather products, petroleum products, wood and wood products, textile, manufacturing, furniture and fixtures, beverage, non-metallic mineral products, footwear and clothing and rubber products, the NSO said.

Manufacturing is the lynchpin of the Philippine economy, which grew by 4.6 percent last year. Manufacturing output had been declining in the five months up to December.

On the average, factories operated at 76.5 percent of capacity in February, compared with a revised 76.1 percent the previous month, it said.

Sectors with capacity utilization rate of more than 80 percent include non-electrical machinery, footwear and clothing and rubber products, said the NSO. *With a report from AFP*

PLDT, 3 others to set up community e-centers

By Abigail L. Ho

FOUR local and foreign entities have expressed interest in setting up community e-centers that will help bring telephone and Internet access even to the remotest communities in the country.

The local firms include dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and pioneer Internet service provider Mosaic Communications Inc., while the foreign players include the Spanish arm of French telecommunications equipment supplier Alcatel and Canadian firm SR Telecom.

Communications Undersecretary Virgilio Peña said in an interview that Alcatel was planning to avail itself of an official development assistance package from the Spanish government to undertake the project.

SRT will modify its existing Telepono sa Barangay project with the government to conform with the new standards of the community e-centers.

Peña explained that SRT was the contractor for certain components of the Department of Transportation and Communications' Telepono sa Barangay project, which aimed to provide telephone access to all barangays in the country.

"They're looking at enhancing the next phase of the project to pattern it after the community e-center model," he said.

The Telepono sa Barangay project has been around since the time of former Presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, but the implementation of its two phases and one subphase was shelved for various reasons.

Peña said that a part of the project's first phase was due for turnover to the local governments by the middle of the year with the rest of the project following within the second half.

The second phase of the project, already patterned after the community e-center model, can be implemented by next year," he added.

PLDT was the first to signify interest in the community e-center project by committing to set up six pilot sites nationwide—two each in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—that could serve as model e-centers for interested parties in the future. MosCom also proposed to set up 50 to 100 community e-centers within one year.

PNOC raising $200M in funds

By Ronnel W. Domingo

PHILIPPINE National Oil Co. said it had solicited from banks proposals on raising $200 million for the refinancing of its exploration unit's 10-percent stake in the Malampaya natural gas project.

PNOC executive vice president Alfredo Parungao said the deadline for the submission of the proposals was slated for yesterday, but he declined to say which banks turned in their proposals.

"We got the approval of the Bangko Sentral to secure the loan, but we still have to apply for a guarantee," Parungao said. "We plan to raise the fund in July."

The official said $175 million would be used to settle a loan from Citibank NA that was used to fund PNOC's share in Malampaya. The loan will expire in March next year.

The remaining $25 million will be used for the development of the Malampaya oil rim, he said.

PNOC Exploration Corp. holds a 10-percent stake in the $4.5-billion Malampaya gas project, which is supplying fuel to three power plants with total generating capacity of 2,700 megawatts. These are the 1,200-MW Ilijan plant, 1,000-MW Sta. Rita plant and the 500-MW San Lorenzo plants, all in Batangas.

Shell Philippines Exploration BV and Texaco Philippines hold stakes of 45 percent each.

Late last year, PNOC announced the creation of a new subsidiary that would assume the government's Malampaya shares, including PNOC-EC's debts incurred in funding the stake.

The government plans to privatize 49 percent of its Malampaya stake through an initial public offering of PNOC 's Malampaya subsidiary.

To raise revenues and cover for a ballooning budget deficit, the government had considered privatizing PNOC-EC itself aside from "securitizing" its future revenues from the Malampaya stake.

Also, the Malampaya consortium is developing an oil reserve that was discovered beneath the gas field.

Last year, the group did a well test for the oil rim, from which it was able to export about 2 million barrels of crude.

GOLFERS
CLUB SHARES, INC.
SEC LICENSE #A 1998-2129
AS OF APRIL 28, 2003

		SELLING	BUYING
1	ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "A"	Please call	Please call
2	BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	630,000	570,000
3	CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	500,000	450,000
4	CAMP JOHN HAY	230,000	200,000
5	CAPITOL HILLS GOLF CLUB	120,000	110,000
6	CELEBRITY SPORTS PLAZA	180,000	170,000
7	CLUB FILIPINO	150,000	130,000
8	COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY	350,000	320,000
9	MAKATI SPORTS CLUB "A"	250,000	220,000
10	MANILA POLO CLUB	2,400,000	2,200,000
11	MANILA SOUTHWOODS GOLF A/B	500,000-600,000	430,000
12	ORCHARD GOLF CLUB A/B/C	Please call	Please call
13	QUEZON CITY SPORTS CLUB	200,000	
14	RIVIERA GOLF CLUB A/B/C	Please call	Please call
15	STA. ELENA GOLF CLUB "A"	1,600,000	1,300,000
16	TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS GOLF	800,000	680,000
17	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS GOLF	720,000	700,000
18	VALLE VERDE COUNTRY CLUB	150,000	135,000
19	VALLEY GOLF CLUB	280,000	250,000
20	WACK WACK GOLF CLUB	8,200,000	

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INTEREST RATES

April 8, 2003
MART 1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 April 28, 2003 (%)	MART1 April 25, 2003 (%)
1 Month	8.4135	8.3327
3 Months	8.5031	8.4115
6 Months	9.2750	9.2250
1 Year	9.7115	9.7000
2 Years	10.3385	10.3846
3 Years	11.1981	11.3211
4 Years	11.9327	12.0211
5 Years	12.1942	12.3423
7 Years	12.9058	12.9481
10 Years	13.1442	13.7846
20 Years	13.6904	13.7846
25 Years	14.1769	14.2481

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

Ruling on Amari case expected to affect market

CYBER Bay shareholders, led by its spokesperson Carol Sy, expressed fears that the ongoing Supreme Court deliberations on the 750-hectare Manila Bay reclamation project, developed by Cyber Bay Corp. (formerly Amari Coastal Bay Development Corp.) might result in the shutting down of 10 other major reclamation projects in the country which, in turn, could lead to the collapse of the financial market.

"The Supreme Court should deliberate (the issue) thoroughly and should not rush judgment because at stake is the viability of the country's financial market," said Sy, who recently organized small Cyber Bay shareholders into a lobby group to get back their hard-earned investments.

Sy said an unfavorable Supreme Court ruling on the motion for the reconsideration of an earlier decision on the Amari land deal case could spell doom for the 10 other developers who have similar land agreements with Public Estates Authority.

Sy said that once the amended joint venture agreement was upheld null and void by the court, all developers with existing arrangement with PEA—including DM Wenceslao & Jan de Nul Consortium, Shoemart Inc., Royal Asia, TOA Corp., FF Cruz, Seaoil, Bacolod Real Estate Development Corp. and Construction Development Corp.—would be affected. The collapse of more than 10 land reclamation projects is seen to snowball into the collapse of the banking industry and the local bourse, she said.

"We are not talking of mince meat here; we are looking at billions of pesos across these 10 PEA-led land agreements. In fact, any adverse decision not only sends a negative message to all foreign investors that the Philippine government could not be relied on to make good on its word on such contracts. This smacks of a dangerous precedent." Sy cautioned that in at least 10 reclamation projects with PEA, foreign capital stood at millions of dollars.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Monday, April 28, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	22,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	35	35.5	35	35?	504,500
China Banking Corp.	660	665	660	660?	2,540
Citystate Savings Bank	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	23.5	23.75	23	23.25?	103,900
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27.5	28	26.5	26.5?	69,100
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	85	85	85	85?	1,100
Phil. Savings Bank	26	26	25	26?	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	10,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5?	7,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.42	1.44	1.42	1.42?	516,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	29,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1315	1315	1315	1315?	6,060
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1030	1030	1030	1030?	30
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.5	12.5	12	12.25?	10,500
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.64	0.67	0.61	0.67	5,890,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	540	540	535	535?	239,970
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.032	0.032	0.032	.032?	1,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.017	0.017	0.016	.016?	4,700,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.29	.3?	5,880,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	365	370	362.5	370	151,380
Ivantage Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.39	.39?	130,000
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	21,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7?	177,000
Manila Electric Co. B	9.6	10.5	9.4	9.6?	341,000
Petron Corp.	1.9	1.92	1.88	1.9?	3,563,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	.94?	200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.46	1.48	1.46	1.48?	158,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.42	2.42	2.4	2.4?	178,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.53	0.54	0.53	.53?	510,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56?	4,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4?	14,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16	16.25	16	16.25	50,200
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56.5	56.5?	31,500
San Miguel Corp. B	66	66	65.5	66	39,500
Universal Robina Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8?	133,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.3	4,730,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.32	0.32	0.32	.32?	20,000
Ayala Corp.	3.9	3.95	3.85	3.9	1,645,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3?	36,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.025	.025?	3,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	20,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3?	5,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.195	0.195	0.175	.19?	10,110,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	.07?	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.235	0.23	.23?	1,230,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.8	11,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.53	.53?	110,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	370,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.17	0.17	0.16	.17?	1,950,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.31	.31?	1,020,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.033	0.033	0.033	.033?	1,500,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.78	.78?	80,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.35	0.38	1,570,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	8,000
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	24,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	270,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.76	2	1.76	1.98?	3,329,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	16.5	16.5	16.25	16.5	17,300
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.35	.36?	740,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	.35?	40,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	12.5	12.5	11.75	11.75?	215,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10	10	10	10	3,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.75?	4,355,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.15	.15?	500,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.21	0.2	.205?	1,970,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.155	.16?	1,300,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.85	0.87	0.83	.84?	4,590,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.04	0.04	0.04	.04?	200,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.16	0.16	1,000,000
SM Development Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	161,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.55?	7,589,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	5,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	30,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.195	0.195	0.195	.195?	200,000
Omico Corp.	0.004	0.0044	0.004	.0042?	70,000,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	111,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	69,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.185	0.185	0.185	.185?	160,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.16	0.185	0.16	.185?	940,000

DISCLOSURES

BALABAC Resources & Holdings Co. Inc. announced the resignation of Juanita Tan Lee as corporate secretary. Elected to replace her was Ma. Cecilia Pesaysco who was also appointed corporate information officer.

* * *

GLOBAL Business Holdings Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting from April 29 to June 24 with record date on May 13.

* * *

DESIGNATED nomination committee members of Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp. were David Go, Anselmo Trinidad Jr. and Carlos Syquia.

* * *

ELECTED directors of Cebu Holdings Inc. were Francisco Licuanan III, Mercedita Nolledo, Jose Rene Almendras, Miriam Katigbak, Antonio Abacan Jr., Natividad Alejo, Enrique Benedicto, Victor Chiongbian and Anastacio Muntuerto Jr.

* * *

ELECTED directors of Manila Jockey Club Inc. were Alfonso Reyno Jr., Pedro Tan, Yolanda Reyno, Mariza Santos-Tan, Patrick Reyno, Ma. Luisa Morales, Martin Cepeda, Christopher Reyno, Roberto Espiritu, Jemie Tan and Derick Wong.

* * *

CENTRO Escolar University declared cash dividends of P0.10 per share in favor of stockholders of record as of May 25 and will be payable on June 19.

* * *

VITARICH Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 27 with record date on May 28.

* * *

ELECTED directors of Cebu Property Ventures & Development Corp. were Francisco Licuanan III, Jose Rene Almendras, Natividad Alejo, Ruben Almendras, Nelson Garcia, Francisco Japson and Armando Samia.

* * *

FILINVEST Development Corp. announced the designation of Ma. Irma Tan as compliance officer of the company. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

April 28, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.905715	1.000000	53.009000
Japan	Yen	0.007537	0.008322	0.441100
United Kingdom	Pound	1.442261	1.592400	84.411500
Hongkong	Dollar	0.116124	0.128213	6.796400
Switzerland	Franc	0.665576	0.734862	38.954300
Canada	Dollar	0.625883	0.691037	36.631200
Singapore	Dollar	0.507972	0.560852	29.730200
Australia	Dollar	0.557638	0.615688	32.637000
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.402555	2.652661	140.614900
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.241524	0.266667	14.135800
Brunei	Dollar	0.506552	0.559284	29.647100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000103	0.000114	0.006000
Thailand	Baht	0.021049	0.023240	1.231900
UAE	Dirham	0.246607	0.272279	14.433200
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.104100	58.527200
Argentina	Peso	0.314484	0.347222	18.405900
Brazil	REAL	0.300702	0.332005	17.599300
Denmark	Kroner	0.134619	0.148633	7.878900
India	Rupee	0.019160	0.021155	1.121400
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.238378	0.263193	13.951600
Mexico	New Peso	0.087029	0.096089	5.093600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.501392	0.553587	29.345100
Norway	Kroner	0.128266	0.141619	7.507100
Pakistan	Rupee	0.015711	0.017346	0.919500
South Africa	Rand	0.125794	0.138889	7.362400
Korea	Won	0.000732	0.000808	0.042800
Sweden	Kroner	0.109661	0.121077	6.418200
Syria	Pound	0.021565	0.023810	1.262100
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.026094	0.028810	1.527200
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000568	0.000627	0.033200

BSP urged to probe Banco Filipino board

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE SISTER of Banco Filipino vice chair Albert Aguirre last week asked the Monetary Board, the policy-making body of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, to place the current board of the Aguirre family's Banco Filipino under investigation and preventive suspension for alleged unsound banking practices in violation of the country's banking laws.

On behalf of clients Anna Maria Aguirre-Koruga and her husband Christopher Koruga, lawyer Jose Bernas filed a 182-page complaint and attached annexes that outlined how Banco Filipino had allegedly engaged in a common pattern of extending loans to borrower-firms controlled by Aguirre in exchange for over-valued real estate, thus putting at risk depositors' money.

Specifically, Bernas cited P1.6 billion in loans to nine borrower-companies that have officers all closely linked to Aguirre and that hold offices in locations directly controlled by the BF vice chair.

Bernas claimed that the loans "represent only a portion of what seems to be the wholesale cannibalization of Banco Filipino's cash resources."

The loans accounted for 38.69 percent of Banco Filipino's peak loan portfolio and 43.87 percent of the bank's capital funds, exceeding the limits on loans to directors, officers, stockholders and related interests (Dosri).

The loans were granted to Glamor World Inc., Filipino Vastland, Filipino Ventures Co. Inc., Taurus Land Inc., BF Home Depot Inc., Pro-Managers Inc., CLI Management Corp., Tierrasud Inc., FBCI Construction Corp.

Bernas pointed out that the nine borrower-companies were mostly undercapitalized and dormant or non-operational. Also, they had either little or no track record in the type of business they were pursuing or had little or no revenue or income prior to the loans.

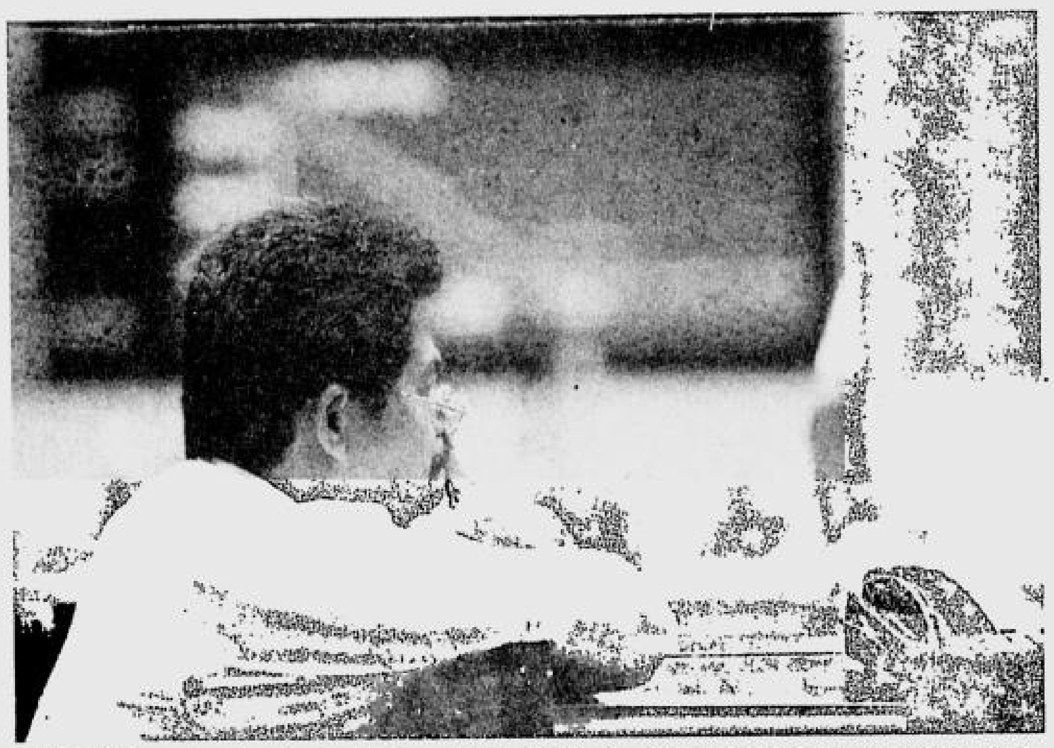
The collateral offered for the loans were often properties purchased from the publicly listed thrift bank itself or obtained from related entities and were inflated in value.

One particular lot used as collateral was valued at P41,000 per square meter more by Banco Filipino than the P15,000 per square meter valuation of Cuervo Appraisers.

Moreover, the complaint alleged that information gathered indicated that the proceeds of the P1.6 billion in loans were not used for the purposes stated in the loan applications, Bernas said.

"These blatant violations of banking laws should not go by without penalty. They have put Banco Filipino, its depositors and stockholders and the entire banking system in jeopardy," Bernas asserted.

Individuals that were registered as officers or directors of the borrower-companies have already executed affidavits while others are willing to execute affidavits attesting complicity to the alleged unlawful borrowing schemes involving Banco Filipino and that they all acted under the direction of Aguirre who also allegedly set up and controlled the companies, the complaint said.



A BROKER studies the electronic board at the Philippine Stock Exchange trading floor in the financial district of Makati, April 28. The composite index shed 1.25 percent, or 13.10 points, to 1,036.29 on worries over the killer disease Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and a rating downgrade by Standard and Poor's.

AFP

Gov't junks bids for long-term T-bills; 91-day yield declines

By Doris C. Dumlao

SPOOKED by the recent credit-rating downgrade on Philippine sovereign debt by Standard & Poor's, the market yesterday bid up longer term treasury bill rates, resulting in the full rejection of the 364-day maturity.

While the benchmark 91-day T-bill rate edged lower by 2.6 basis points to average at 7.434 percent, the 182-day rate shot up by 147 basis points to 8.4 percent.

Only the 91-day tenor was fully awarded out of the government's P4-billion offer as the market factored in the perceived increase in long-term risks from Philippine debt papers following S&P's ratings downgrade.

The government accepted only P2.24 billion out of the P3 billion offer for the 184-day maturity in order to prevent any further rise in this tenor while none was accepted for the P2.5-billion offering of 364-day T-bills.

"Whenever there is uncertainty, the market will go short-term," Deputy Treasurer Eduardo Mendiola told reporters after the auction yesterday.

"The market priced in this downgrade but it's not going to be permanent. There should only be a one-time effect and rates shouldn't increase in the succeeding auctions," he said.

Last week, S&P scaled down the Philippines' long-term sovereign credit rating to 'BB' from 'BB plus,' over concerns on the government's fragile fiscal position.

S&P also lowered the short-term foreign currency rating to 'A-3' from 'A-2', even as it affirmed a 'stable' outlook on the long-term ratings.

Still as a consequence of the downgrade, Mendiola said the Bureau of Treasury would expect the market to likewise bid up the five-year treasury bond auction today.

"For sure, there will be some alignment but it's going to be minimal, about five basis points," he said.

"If it's too high, we are ready to reject (the bids)," he said.

Mendiola also said the government's commercial borrowings later this year should be barely affected by the downgrade, which was the country's lowest rating from S&P since the 1997 Asian currency turmoil.

"The effect is really on pricing but we don't have problem with access," Mendiola said.

Subic freeport seen having lowest power rates with Aboitiz takeover

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

POWER bills of companies operating in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone are expected to fall by 13 percent with the takeover of distribution by the Aboitiz consortium and completion of a supply deal with Mirant and National Power Corp.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) Chair Felicito Payumo reported that the power rate at the freeport would go down from P4.49 per kilowatt-hour to P3.90 per kWh starting in the second half this year.

"Our move was very much unlike other utility privatization projects that have resulted in increase of tariff rates," Payumo said.

He said Subic's power rates would be the lowest in the country, lower than Manila Electric Co.'s P6.02 per kWh; Clark economic zone's P4.94 per kWh, and Calabarzon's P5.80 per kWh.

Payumo said the new private distributor—Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. and Davao Light and Power Co. Inc.—would lead to savings of 40 centavos per kWh while the supply agreement with Mirant and Napocor would yield savings of 10 centavos per kWh. Napocor and Mirant will have a 50-50 share of the power supply agreement with Napocor getting the supply from its independent power plants while Mirant will get its power from the excess capacity of its Sual power station in Pangasinan.

Since the contracts would be in effect for 5 years, investors would have the lowest power rate for at least 5 years.

Payumo said the improved efficiency and economy in the operation of the power distribution system through privatization would allow locators, businesses and consumers to benefit from the reduced power distribution charge.

Aside from getting P40 million in annual fee from the Aboitiz group, Payumo said the SBMA would also be spared from spending P350 million for the rehabilitation of the freeport's facilities.

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Notice is hereby given that the estate of late SIMPLICIA L. VILLARANTE has been extrajudicially settled by her heirs as per Doc.#209 Page#42 Book#6 Series of 2003 before Notary Public Al Harith D. Sali of Quezon City.
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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BENJAMIN C. DAVID was the subject of self-adjudication by his sole heir MARTINA I. DAVID as per Document No. 95, Page 21, Book I, Series of 2003 executed before Notary Public Atty. Reginaldo L. Hernandez (PDI-April 15, 22 & 29, 2003)

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- Position Paper Presentations of Conference Delegates (1 for each country represented)
- Conference Resolutions
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DAY 2, May 24, 2003 --- Focused on Business & Economics
10:00am- 5:00pm
- Registration
- Program for Overseas Filipinos by DOLE
- Business Opportunities for Overseas Filipinos/ SMEs by DTI
- Technology Assistance to Overseas Filipinos/ SMEs by TLRC
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- Entrepreneurship Seminar for Overseas Filipinos
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DAY 3, May 25, 2003 — Focused on Government Programs for Overseas Filipinos
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PLEA OF HOMEBUYERS, DEVELOPERS

Scrap 10% VAT on housing loan payments

By Charles E. Buban

AT FIRST glance the regulation issued by the Bureau of Internal Revenue on March 11 this year would seem irrelevant to homebuyers and housing loan borrowers.

In fact, Revenue Regulations 12-2003 only mentioned of banks, nonbank financial intermediaries and finance companies that were imposed with, beginning Jan. 1, 2003, a 10 percent value added tax (VAT) on their services pursuant to section 1 of Republic Act 9010.

RA 9010, which set the imposition of a new tax beginning January 2003, imposes VAT on services done in the exercise of a profession; services rendered by banks, and financial institutions; and services rendered by stock, real estate, customs, commercial, and immigration brokers.

Yet, there is another sector that will be shouldering more of the burden that this BIR regulation has imposed: the housing loan borrowers.

Passing on the burden

Subdivision and Housing Developers Association revealed banks and financial institutions will simply pass the tax burden to their borrowers.

With around 400 member-developers, the SHDA is the country's largest and leading organization of subdivision and housing developers.

The additional tax is of much concern for the SHDA considering that its members, composed primarily of small- and medium-size developers, depends on these individual borrowers and their capacity to pay.

Call to amend RA 9010

In voicing out their concern, the SHDA recently forwarded a position paper calling for the postponement of the tax imposition and ultimately amend a portion in RA 9010 that mandates the BIR to issue such revenue regulation.

Only the Congress can amend a law like RA 9010.

Copies of the paper were given to President Macapagal-Arroyo through Housing czar Michael Defensor, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr., and members of the House committee on housing.

"While SHDA fully understands the pressing need to increase government's revenues, and while we support tax collection reforms, we believe taxation must be undertaken without causing undue and sudden dislocations in such a vital industry like the housing sector," explained Teofisto Guingona III, SHDA chair in defending the position paper.

He stressed that the implications are staggering for the housing sector, on the viability of housing projects, end-borrowers affordability, and collection efficiency.

Not only that, he also included Pag-Ibig's estimated 350,000 housing loan borrowers and 1.5 million members who are paying multipurpose loans who are affected by the BIR regulation.

"Imagine the additional paperworks on top of the processing of all these loans—it's just staggering," Guingona added.

Everybody's affected

Since the new BIR regulation was retroactively implemented at the beginning of the year, the SHDA were able to assess its impact on borrowers before coming out with the paper.

"Even old and current accounts are affected with the imposition of 10 percent VAT since their monthly amortization amounts increased," said SHDA national president Jesus Atencio. "This would eventually lead to a higher rate of defaults and nonpayments."

Even for existing borrowers, he said the additional tax will create budgeting problem.

"Being fixed-income earners and always on a budget, a sudden surge of 10 percent in their amortization payments would create confusion in their budget—they never considered this additional tax when they first applied and eventually qualified for the housing loan," Atencio explained.

Effects of VAT

With the additional tax, all interest payments on housing loans, contracts to sell, and receivables assignments coming from the homeowners and homebuyers will now incur an additional 10 percent of their interest cost on their monthly amortization.

Said Atencio: "I don't think any borrower will be encouraged. It's a sort of domino effect and the bottom line here, housing finance will be affected."

"The rate by which housing loans are paid by the individual borrowers will no longer be efficient and as a result the sustainability of housing finance becomes questionable," he added.

Sector uniquely situated

In its paper, the SHDA stressed that housing sector should be exempt from the additional tax imposed under the BIR regulation.

"The housing sector is uniquely situated because, unlike other industries, it performs a social good—expanding property ownership to thousands of homeless and landless Filipinos, giving them a stake in society, improving overall quality of life and promoting social stability," Atencio enumerated.

He added that this sector possesses massive pump-priming potentials that could generate at least 16 times every peso of the country's gross domestic product.

"But with the imposition of the 10 percent VAT, the sector's capacity to spark economic growth will be quenched," he said.

Canceling out feats

In one of the analyses done by the association's committee on taxation, it found out the 10 percent VAT will just negate whatever reforms the Macapagal administration has undertaken to make housing and housing finance more accessible and affordable to a great number of homeless Filipinos.

"While the government has successfully lowered interest rates to make housing more affordable, the imposition of the additional tax will increase interest rates once more," explained Bienvenido Uy, the committee chair.

"Higher interest rates mean higher monthly amortizations and less affordability of housing loans. And with higher monthly amortizations, there will be much less number of people who may be able to avail and be included in President Macapagal-Arroyo's program on housing," he added.

No clear benefit

In analyzing further the impact of the additional tax, the SHDA committee did not find anything the government may clearly benefit from.

Since there will now be an increased rate of defaults, overall VAT collection from housing loan payments will likely not be sufficient to offset the 5 percent gross receipts tax (GRT) that the additional tax has replaced *(see computations)*.

"Because VAT is an input-output-based tax, the loss of 5 percent GRT and the ability of banks and financial institutions to use their creditable input VAT will negate the perceived higher tax collection from the VAT on housing loan payments," Uy explained.

Unless the banks will agree to absorb a portion of the VAT cost they are charging their customers, these banks will actually get double benefits from the VAT system: from the elimination of the 5 percent GRT; and from the application of their input tax (derived from the purchase of goods and services) which has the effect of paying the BIR much less than the VAT collected from customers.

"The difference between what is collected and what is paid is additional income to the banks," Uy revealed.

Because of this fact, the SHDA is urging to continue instead the 5 percent GRT rather than the present 10 percent VAT on services of banks.

No more differentiation

Another point to consider is the fact that based on existing laws and BIR regulations, if the value of the transaction is less than P1 million, the sale of such real estate will be exempted from the VAT.

But with the new BIR regulation, Uy explained that levels of real estate transactions will no longer matter.

"The new BIR regulation seemed not to agree with the earlier policy," he pointed out.

The SHDA argued in its paper that if real estate sales of P1 million and below are already VAT exempt, then whatever monthly amortization payments arising from such transaction should also be VAT exempt.

Revenues to the Government

	BEFORE	NOW	DIFFERENCE
GRT	5%	NIL	(5%)
VAT	NIL	10%	
Less:			
Estimated Average Input Tax-			
Transitional or otherwise	NIL	5%	5%
Net effect to Government	5%	5%	0%

Cost to Consumer

	BEFORE	NOW	DIFFERENCE
GRT	NIL	NIL	NIL
VAT	NIL	10%	10%
Net effect to Consumers/			
Borrowers	NIL	10%	10%

Banks' Profit and Loss

	BEFORE	NOW	DIFFERENCE
GRT	5%	NIL	5%
VAT	NIL	(10%)	
Less:			
VAT passed on to clients		10%	
Input Tax - from purchase			
of goods and services		5%	5%
Favorable Net effect to Banks			
from VAT system	5%	5%	10%

A CHART, prepared by the Subdivision Housing and Developers Association, shows that the government may stand to lose on revenues from the new VAT system as compared to the previous system (gross receipt tax) that banks use. In fact, there may be no increases in VAT collection because of the input taxes that banks may apply

> 'Because VAT is an input-output-based tax, the loss of 5 percent GRT and the ability of banks and financial institutions to use their creditable input VAT will negate the perceived higher tax collection from the VAT on housing loan payments'

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IN ACCORDANCE WITH NHMFC BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 3196, SERIES OF 2002, AND CORPORATE CIRCULAR NO. 044 DATED 23 JULY 2002, ALL NHMFC BORROWERS WITH ARREARAGES OF **36 MONTHS AND ABOVE IN THEIR HOUSING LOAN**, SHALL NOT BE COVERED BY THE AUTOMATIC MORTGAGE REDEMPTION INSURANCE (MRI).

NON-COVERAGE WOULD MEAN THAT NO CLAIMS WHATSOEVER COULD BE MADE ON THE MRI POLICY IN CASE THE BORROWER/ CO-BORROWER DIES.

THE MRI, IF IN FORCE, SHALL BE APPLIED TO THE OUTSTANDING BALANCE OF THE LOAN.

BORROWERS WHOSE MRI ARE DELETED FROM COVERAGE SHALL ONLY BE REINSTATED UPON UPDATING OR RESTRUCTURING OF THE LOAN.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, KINDLY PROCEED TO THE NHMFC MAIN OFFICE LOCATED AT FILOMENA BLDG., 104 AMORSOLO ST., LEGASPI VILLAGE, MAKATI CITY, WITH TELEPHONE NOS. 8931501 TO 25 CONNECTING TO ALL DEPARTMENTS.

BORROWERS MAY ALSO VISIT THE NEAREST NHMFC REGIONAL/ SATELLITE OFFICES: 1) 3/F Anes Atrium, Rizal Ave. 2500 San Fernando, La Union; 2) 058 La Patricia Bldg., Maharlika Hi-way, Cauayan, Isabela; 3) 3/F Dona Pepita II, Rizal Street, Legaspi City; 4) 2/F AJL Bldg., Gen. Luna St., Iloilo; 5) Rm. 304 3/F Machay Bldg., Gorordo Ave., Cebu City; 6) Mezzanine Flr., Consuelo Bldg., Corrales Ave., Cagayan de Oro; 7) 4/F Amigleo Bldg., 369 Bonifacio cor. Bangoy, Davao City; 8) 3/F D&V II Bldg., J.C. Aquino Ave., Butuan City; 9) Villasor Bldg., cor. San Juan & Luzurriaga, Bacolod City; 10) Rm. 8 Safi Bldg., Santiago Blvd. cor. Magsaysay Ave., Gen. Santos City; 11) 2/F Olma Bldg., Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite; and 12) Amo Bldg., Bo. Macabling, National Highway, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

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PVPI's commitment to quality

Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Gonzalo Puyat & Sons, one of the nation's oldest industrial firms (est. 1907) with holdings in Real Estate, Banking, Oil Exploration, Telecommunications, Steel Products Manufacturing, Mining, Flour Milling, Marine Products and Agro-Industrial Development.

Established in 1991, Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc. (PVPI) have risen to become the leading vinyl manufacturer in the Philippines. Its 500 strong distribution network is second to none as its products are regarded as the best locally manufactured vinyl flooring tiles and sheets available in the market.

PVPI have also gained the reputation of being a total customer satisfaction company in the industry. It has established services such as installation and inspection, design, and a dedicated customer service department that are not found in other local floor covering companies. PVPI also believes that, with any organization, the people behind the products are the keys to success.

As such, PVPI have instituted continuous training for all personnel dedicated to bringing a level of service to the market that is unmatched in the industry. These, together with innovative marketing and business strategies, have made PVPI the leader of vinyl floor covers manufacturing in the Philippines.

Our mission...

We will develop the highest quality of diversified flooring products and services;

We will promote Customer Service and establish high standards of professionalism within the company;

We will improve the quality life of our employees through effective management of our resources.

And we will lead in the advancement of Filipino manufacturers in the production of quality products in the community, and in the country as a whole.

Our vision...

PVPI, the number one flooring company in the Philippines is committed to:

Continuously enhance its product line to supply the flooring requirements of Filipino consumers with the highest quality vinyl tiles at a reasonable cost.

Transforming PVPI into a Customer Driven company by enhancing skills and cultivating professionalism within the company.

Thus, making PVPI a vital and strategic partner in the construction industry and a significant contributor to Philippine economic growth and development.

PUYAT VINYL PRODU

IS NOW ISO 9001:200

THE PVPI Family with its top dealers and architects

PUYAT Vinyl Products, Inc. ISO team

Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc., the No. 1 vinyl floo is ISO Certified (ISO 9001:2000)

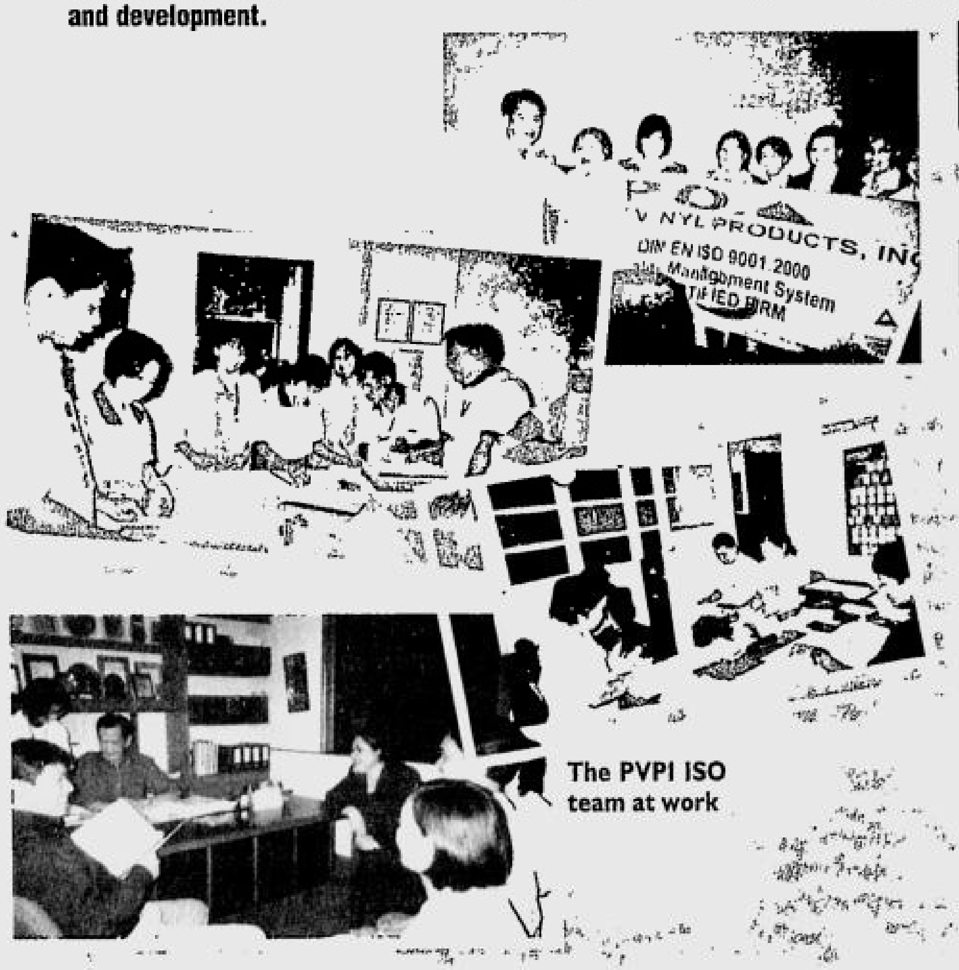
PUYAT Vinyl Products, Inc. passed the requirements for certification of its quality management system last March 31, 2003.

Getting the official certification from an accredited international body TUV Rheinland Phil., Ltd. is a major step toward the goal of PVPI to implement its vision as "the number one flooring company in the Philippines." The certification was achieved with rigorous eleven months of intensive preparation including training and orientation documentation, and infrastructure improvements, which started last March 2002 to February 2003. With its certification PVPI management quality system is now in conformity with the established international standards.

This means that PVPI did not only meet the strict ISO regulatory requirements in providing quality products and services to its customer, but it has also provided for structur improvement by setting up measurable quality objectiv with adequate controls in order to improve PVPI organi effectiveness and productivity.

The strong top management commitment and leader participation of all PVPI employees in the developmen agement system ensure its effective implementation of at all levels of PVPI organization. Human resources de upgrading of PVPI's plant facilities were instrumental of improved customer service.

The quality management system provided for detail mentation of PVPI's processes thus removing confusion areas in its system and emphasized the interconnect



The PVPI ISO team at work

PUYAT Vinyl Makati Heaad Office staff

PVPI HEA
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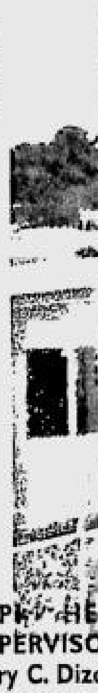
Customer Se
Accountant;
T. Dumarao
Clarissa Ald
Mayor, Cred
Beltran, HR
Executive As



PVPI Ba

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EDGARDO P. Reyes, PVPI President and John Paul G. Reyes, EVP/COO of PVPI, are shown accepting ISO 9001:2000 Certificate from Uwe Roessiger, COO of TUV Rheinland.

ɔring company in the Philippines,

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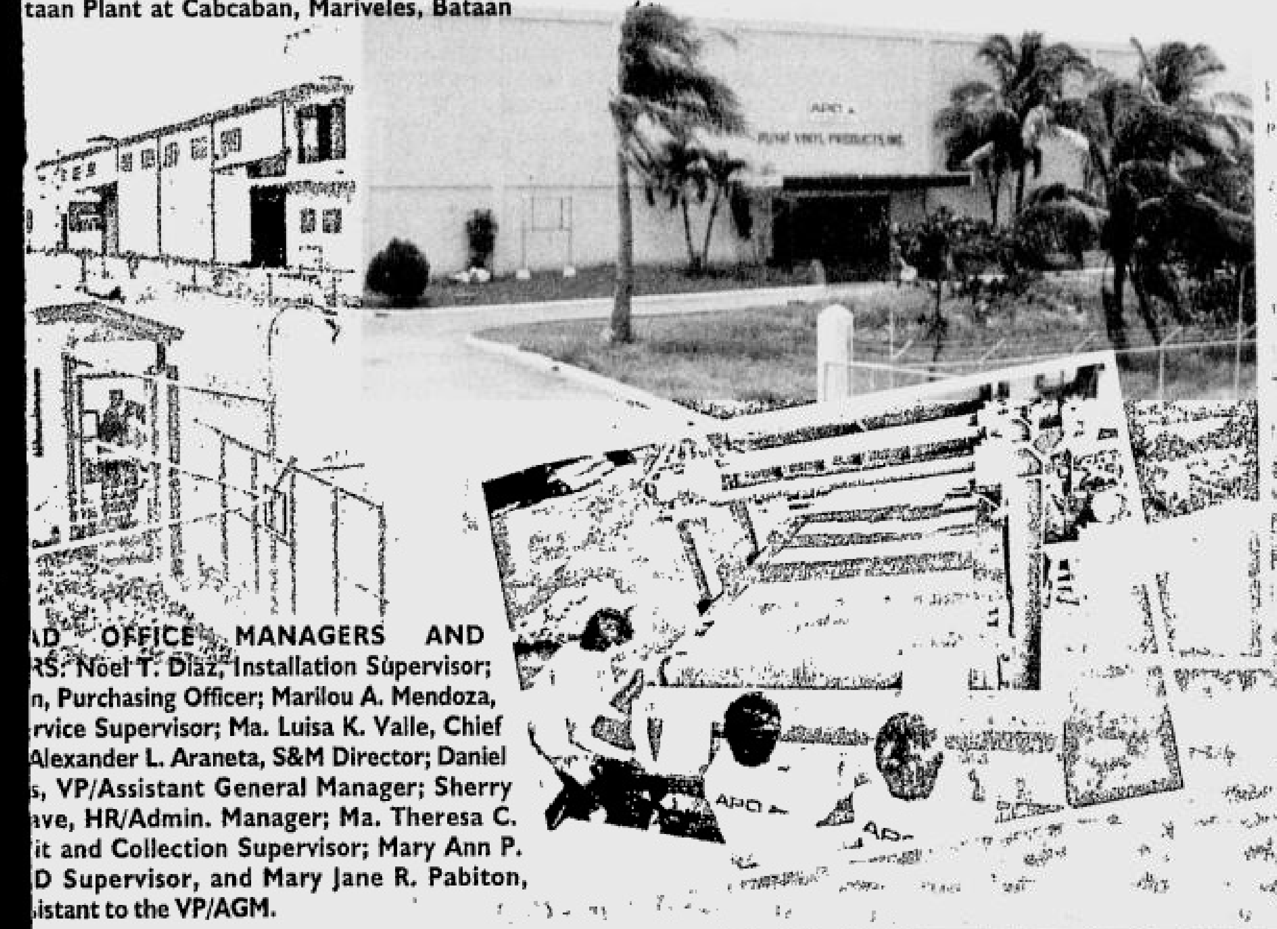
work function in the workplace. It made each employee aware that every little thing one does has an impact and an effect on the greater number and on the organization itself. Thus, the implementation of the concept of "accountability and responsibility" in all its actuations, led to each employee in going beyond self and look into the totality specially its impact on PVPI quality of customer service.

To fully prepare the organization in its ISO program, an intensive training and orientation on the ISO 9001:2000 was conducted by TUV Rheinland Phil. Ltd., PVPI's ISO consultant. The PVPI ISO team worked round the clock to pursue this endeavor and led a company-wide ISO campaign to fulfill the requirements of the international standard as a means of transforming PVPI into a more competitive and market driven company in providing high quality flooring products and services to the Filipino consumers.

taan Plant at Cabcaban, Mariveles, Bataan



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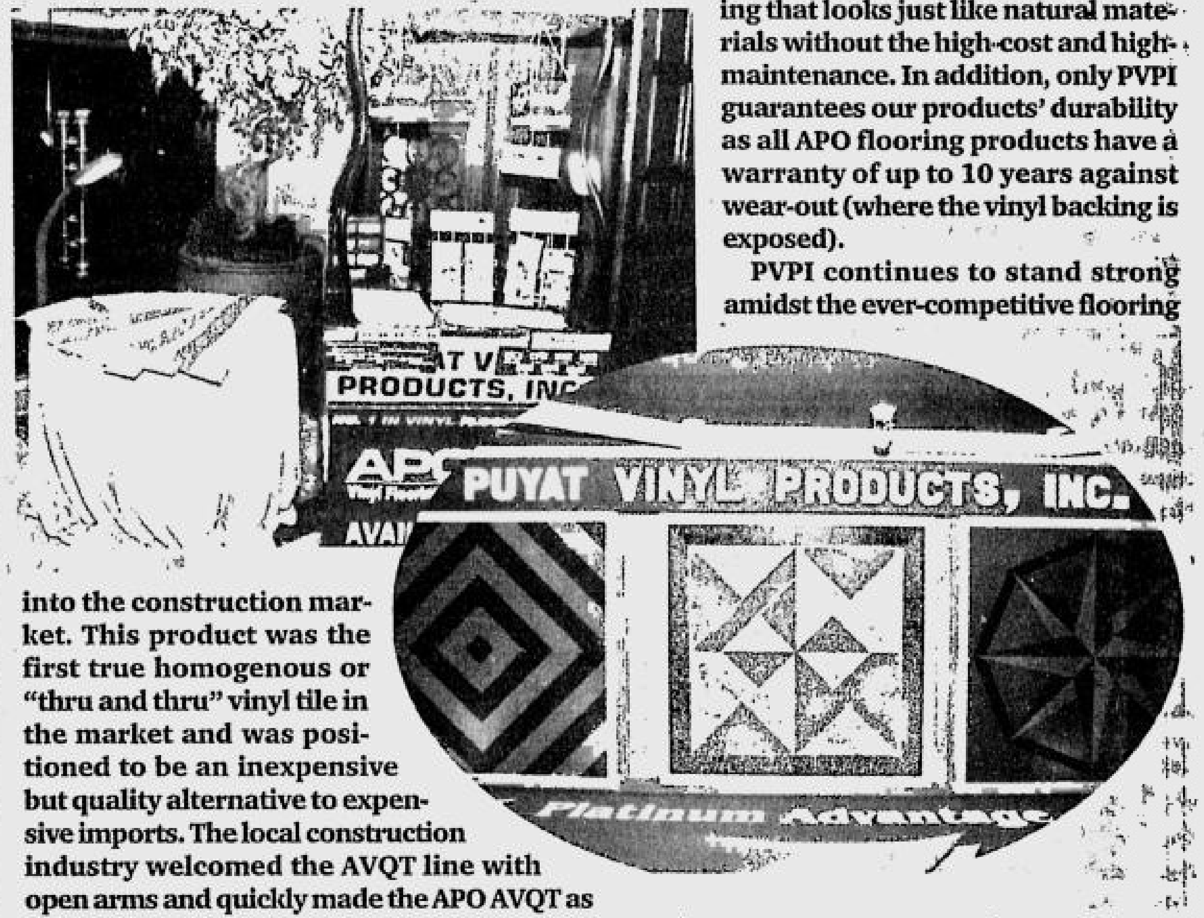
In the early '90s, Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc. (PVPI) emerged as one of the country's most significant players in the flooring industry by introducing the APO Vinyl Quartz Tile (AVQT) into the construction market. This product was the first true homogenous or "thru and thru" vinyl tile in the market and was positioned to be an inexpensive but quality alternative to expensive imports. The local construction industry welcomed the AVQT line with open arms and quickly made the APO AVQT as the specified brand among architects, contractors and end-users as well for their various commercial as well residential project requirements.



The government's trade liberalization policy in the late 1990s opened the market to foreign flooring products that were not only competitive in terms of price but offered superior quality as well. This turn of events did not sit well with local manufacturers, PVPI included as competition turned fierce with the imports gaining the edge. Quick on its feet, PVPI developed and introduced three years ago the APO Designer Series and APO Platinum Selection. These products, known worldwide as laminated resilient flooring, offers the local market natural wood and stone-looking planks and tiles that come with a patented protective wear-layer. This wear-layer protects the wood and stone film from fading while also protecting the tile or plank from floor stress coming from foot and rolling-load traffic. Therefore, consumers now have flooring that looks just like natural materials without the high-cost and high-maintenance. In addition, only PVPI guarantees our products' durability as all APO flooring products have a warranty of up to 10 years against wear-out (where the vinyl backing is exposed).

PVPI continues to stand strong amidst the ever-competitive flooring market. Our APO AVQT continues to be the number 1 homogenous vinyl tile with a 1,000-strong dealership network. The Platinum Designer Series, Wood and Stone Selection has been specified in numerous residential and commercial projects with the country's biggest developers' making APO their flooring of choice.

As part of its program to be a total flooring company, Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc. not only manufacturers and markets vinyl-flooring products but also is the first in the country to introduce a water-based adhesive. Aptly branded as the APO Powerbond, the local market now has a non-toxic adhesive with better adhesion versus other adhesives such as contact cement. In addition, PVPI also introduced to the market a floorcare system – The APO Powerstrip, Powershine, Powerbuff, Powerseal and Powerclean. These products provide vinyl floor owners with an inexpensive but excellent cleaning solutions at cost much lower than the leading brands.

Truly, Puyat Vinyl Products, Inc. has come a long way and with the ISO 9001:2000 certification for quality management systems, PVPI is looking not only to the local market but to go globally as well and uplift the name of the Filipino manufacturer.

Puyat Vinyl Bataan Plant personnel

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Tree-like design the next step in urban planning

By Tessa R. Salazar

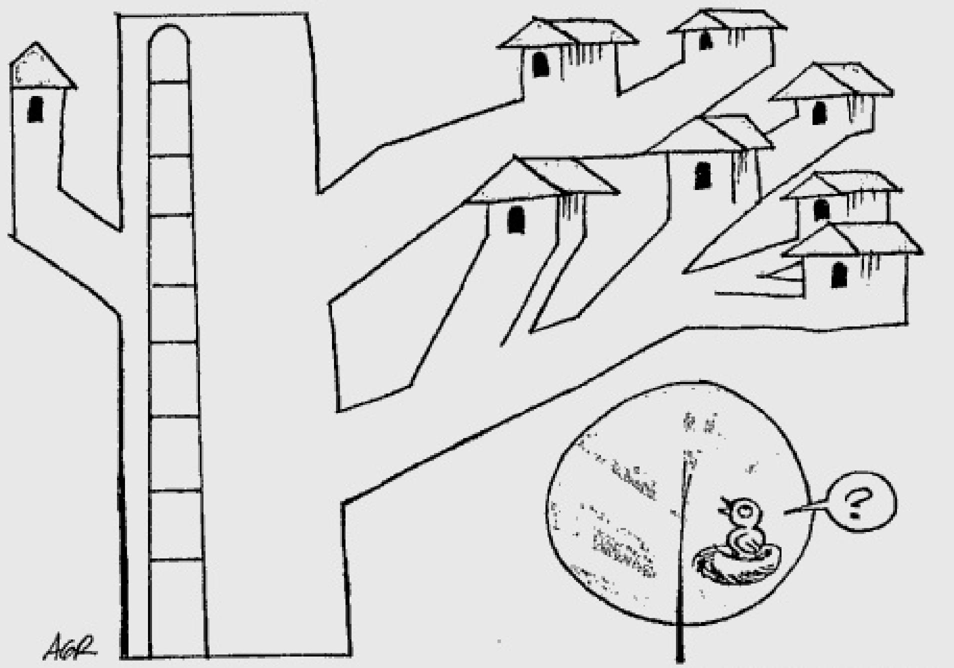

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

WHAT'S the next logical step after rapid urbanization? This question has been an architectural challenge for many mass housing designers. The challenge involved creativity, technical expertise and a heart for nature.

The challenge needed a response fast, as rapid urbanization has resulted in sky-high prices in many "premiere" urban residential spots in Asia such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo.

Very simple hierarchy

The best some architects have come up with is a tree. But take a second look. The tree-like approach has been around since the 1960s and the 1970s.

Hong Kong architect Joseph Francis Wong describes that a tree assumes a very simple hierarchy. It has a main trunk, dividing out into branches that spread out into even smaller branches and leaves.

"The order of scale is very clear from the trunk to the leaf," said Wong, whose current research is on developing housing designs with the capacity for flexible spatial layouts and on design process and knowledge management.

Unique form

He noted another clear tree characteristic: "No two trees are alike. Although every tree shares the same components regardless of species—trunks, branches and leaves—each of them take on a unique form."

He told architects that despite the highly complex form trees take, the mechanism behind their growth pattern is extremely straightforward: grow toward the sun.

For a tree to survive, it must therefore fight for the best possible position to receive sunlight. As a tree grows, each of its branches will try to reach for the sun but any one position can only be taken up by one branch of the tree at any one time.

"The first branch grows toward the sun and takes up the second best position, and so on. This continues with each branch reacting to the ever-changing network of branches around it until a shape is defined."

Therefore, he added, despite its complexity, the form of each tree is a result of its reaction to the changes around it based on simple standardized rules.

Modularity

Wong said that trees are modular—made up of standard parts grouped together. Each of the standard parts—the trunk, branches and leaves—function more or less independently.

"A tree can have a branch cut off with no significant effect on its normal functioning. It would simply regrow and be replaced.

This modularity and replaceability of parts make for some interesting propositions in the making of a built human environment that grows and reacts to change.

A diverse environment need not be the result of complicated design principles; a complex form can evolve from the configuration of simple standard parts; the rules controlling the configuration of parts can be very simple as well and the standard parts can be modularized and be replaceable.

Multi-leveled

He describes a tree-like approach to mass housing design as being multi-leveled. Within this hierarchy of levels, any given or fixed elements can be termed as a support, and any element the user or designer is free to add in or change "infill," as he cited from Boekholt, Dinjens, Habraken and Thijssen.

"Thus on the building lot level, the support is the government-controlled setting out of building lot boundaries or same-level elements, and the infill is the buildings (element of the next lower level) the lot owner would design and construct."

The number of levels, Wong told Filipino architects, depend on the buildings, wings, units and rooms where design decisions can be made independently, even possibly by different agents or interested parties.

Since each level of control is now independent of the others, some of the decision-making can be passed back to the actual users, who should logically be in the best position to determine the infill element configurations at the unit and room level—their territories of use and control.

95% of Hong Kong residents live in multi-units

By Tessa R. Salazar

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

HONG Kong, the former British colony considered one of the world's "shopping meccas," which has recently been tagged one of the epicenters of the dreaded Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak, is home to at least 7 million people.

Considering its quaint land area (at only about 1,098 square kilometer), Hong Kong's mass housing industry has been considered a success. Filipino developers planning mass housing projects in the Philippines usually look at the Hong Kong model for inspiration and solutions.

Not many know that over 95 percent of the population of Hong Kong live in one form of multi-unit mass housing, as the public sector houses slightly over 50 percent of the population.

Many changes, improvements

Renowned Hong Kong architect Joseph Francis Wong told a crowd of Filipino architects at the World Building and Construction Exposition (Worldbex) last month that since the first batch of public housing blocks was built in 1953, the standard block has gone through many changes and improvements.

He reasoned that to facilitate efficient production, public housing in Hong Kong utilized standard designs with a repeated floor plan. The same layout is used for every floor of the building. "Furthermore, the same standardized designs are used over and over again in all public housing estates built around the same period," he stressed.

Housing block design

Wong cited the housing block design by the Hong Kong Housing Authority for public housing—the latest home ownership scheme of the government.

Based on what he calls the common "cruciform" tower with four wings that hold a pair of units each, the configuration forms an eight-unit typical plan with two unit-type variations: a 62-sq.-m net area three-bedroom unit and a 45-sq.-m net area two-bedroom unit.

Hong Kong's three separate public housing estates showing the latest housing ownership scheme—phase 24A—are also made using this type.

To demonstrate the capacity of this type of housing block, phase 24A alone, which has altogether eight concord blocks, contains 2,541 units.

In one of these estates called Yu Chui Court (16 blocks) located in Sha Tin, all 960 units in the three blocks on offer are identical three-bedroom units satisfying the spatial needs of as many households.

Private-sector housing

Surprisingly, said Wong, despite bureaucratic limitations on public architects, the situation is not much different in the private-sector housing.

"Most private developments offer only the same two layout types that are found in the Concord Blocks, albeit with minor variations in the exact unit sizes," said Wong.

And commonality seems to be the name of the game in Hong Kong among architects who create housing designs—be they for the public or private sector.

Wong said similar typical plan layouts have been used in various housing projects in the past decade or so.

Wong challenged the crowd of Filipino architects to follow the typical plans he brought with him—plans of five mass housing projects in separate locations designed by different architects for different developers in Hong Kong. Trying to spot the difference among the five, it seems, would be atypical.

TURNOVER of first housing unit last January

Victoria Court housing for deserving employees

IT all started with a dream that someday, many deserving employees of the company will have a decent roof above their heads...so is the vision of Archie King, chief executive officer of Victoria Court.

In 1989, that dream started to become a reality when the company bought parcels of land at Las Piñas City, built some 28 townhome units, sold them at cost to deserving loyal employees through the Social Security System, and started what now is known as Don Angelo King Village Phase 1.

It was very appreciated and sought after by the employees that in 1999, with the help of William Go, the overall project implementor, he began what would be the phase two of the said project on the other parcels of land in the same area. Now he has a bigger ambition—to build a minimum of at least 70 units of 20 to 40 square-meter floor area on a 38 to 75 sq.-m lot area which would cost only about P350,000 (on a typical unit) to P500,000 on the bigger units, all of which are again at cost.

He commissioned Vazbilt, a respected company when it comes to mass-housing projects, for the project using its own precast construction materials including concrete tegula roofing that Vazbilt has been known for.

The project was officially launched last year and is scheduled to be completed before the last quarter of the year. The first unit was turned over to King last January as a symbol of another dream come true.

Hardiflex slated at Cebu expo

JAMES Hardie Philippines Inc., the manufacturer of Hardiflex fiber cement boards, will be among the major participants at the 11th Construction Show Cebu slated from June 6 to 9 at the SM City Cebu Trade Hall.

Organized by L.A. Ducut & Co. Inc. (Ladci), the expo is the largest and longest running construction and infrastructure trade show in Southern Philippines.

Launched in 1993, Construction Show Cebu has been the premiere showcase for new products, trends, systems and services in the building and construction industry in the region. It has displayed a consistent commitment in promoting the growth and development of the industry by featuring the latest technology and innovations available.

The expo is envisioned to carry on the multi objectives of providing a venue for relevant and updated products, facilitating project collaborations, expediting technology transfer, and as a forum for industry discussions.

The event is supported by Hardwares Consolidated Inc (HCI).

For inquiries, call up the Manila liaison office at (02) 873-8202 or 873-1198; and at Cebu Office at (032) 232-3740, 412-9463 or (0916) 6139179.

COMMUNITY INNOVATIONS INC.

Seizing dreams, meeting opportunities

By Jmar Gambol
Contributor

IT IS said in crisis comes opportunity.

Amid the challenges of the Philippine real estate industry, Ayala Land Inc., the country's leading developer and Asia's most admired real estate company, saw an opportunity to address the needs of the long-suffering middle-market home buyer.

Its answer is Community Innovations Inc. or CII. Under Ayala Land, CII is mandated to dedicate itself to the residential needs of young urban achievers in the mid-market segment. CII expects to meet these needs with high quality workmanship and dependability that is the traditional Ayala way. In Community Innovations, these virtues have been married with affordability and value for money.

As a wholly owned subsidiary of Ayala Land, CII enjoys full resource backing from its parent company. As a separate entity, it has autonomy and greater flexibility in responding to customer requirements and competition. All the critical management and technical positions are held by ALI executives, trained within ALI and tasked to bring ALI's culture of excellence and respect for customers, to CII.

'Dream condo'

Although just over a year old, Community Innovations has already embarked on a new opportunity, addressing the needs of young urban achievers in the midst of the urban landscape itself. With The Columns, Ayala Avenue, a high-rise condominium complex located right in the midst of the Makati central business district, CII intends to make its mark upon the city skyline. Envisioned as the "dream condo" for young, mid-market buyers, The Columns will combine features and amenities not seen in Makati condos with an affordable price and the peace of mind that comes from dealing with an Ayala company.

The Columns' sales figures confirm that indeed, there is a mid-range market that wants to be serviced with quality, innovative design and affordability. Last week, CII president Angela de Villa Lacson announced the launch of Tower 2 of The Columns, after Tower 1 achieved a 93-percent sales take-up in a span of less than four months.

The last real estate crisis, which would have deterred lesser organizations, inspired ALI to seize the moment and enter the mid-market arena. Its reasons are self-evident: many developments catering to the middle-class home buyer have become disappointing realities, or tragic noncompletions. Community Innovations dedicated itself to bring the average home-buyer's dreams, into reality, with the dedication and reputation of Ayala Land to back its endeavors. Indeed, it offered the "dream"—tree-lined streets, safe and expansive parks, true community—in their first project, Verdana Homes, between Bacoor and Las Piñas. It was taken up at the phenomenal rate of more than 500 units in less than 8 months.

Best in class

The people of Community Innovations believe that the Filipino deserves world-class living standards. They bring this belief into every aspect of their development process.

In the planning phase, they take pains to balance affordability with the drive to offer a residential product that is "best in class" (in location, concept, amenities, finishes, unit layouts, and overall esthetics). CII engages the same triple A technical consultants and contractors used by ALI to ensure quality and superior workmanship.

Unlike other developers, Community Innovations does not abandon its customers after turnover of their units, but follows through on their commitment by handling the property management through Ayala Property Management Co. APMC, which handles the care and maintenance of all Ayala developments, is renowned for going above and beyond the call of duty to maintain the value and livability of its retail and residential responsibilities. In CII's case, the APMC not only provides actual maintenance and repair assistance, but also helps form homeowners' associations and condo boards.

The fact that Community Innovations is a new, young company means it is more flexible and adaptable to the ever-changing currents of the real estate market.

Solid foundation

At the same time, its roots in Ayala Land give it a solid foundation of resources and reputation upon which to grow. Community Innovations combines the daring needed to navigate the challenges of the real estate market with the strength required, from Ayala Land, to win in the end.

With the success of Verdana Homes and the exciting growth of The Columns, Ayala Avenue, Community Innovations is more committed than ever to the mandate it was given by Ayala Land: to meet the needs and furnish the dreams of the young urban achievers. Quality, workmanship and dependability, to deliver on commitments, aren't optional: they are required.

VIVANT FLATS BREAKS GROUND

Filinvest Alabang Inc. recently held the groundbreaking rites for Vivant Flats, a 17-story residential condominium located in Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang. Designed by world-renowned consuant Wimberly Allison Tong & Coo, Vivant Flats offers modern conveniences of condo living with a generous amenity of breathing space and landscaped greens. From left are FAI vice president Michael Gotianun, Vivant Flats' first investor Antonio Elmer Tan, Filinvest Land chair and CEO Mercedes Gotianun, Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, FAI president Efren Gutierrez, FAI executive vice president Josephine Gotianun Yap and Rev. Msgr. Felipe Ocol.

Various types of homes to choose from

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

THERE are many choices on what type of house you may own. Looking at the various choices can confuse you and it would be best that you fully assess your real needs and real priorities (and your budget) in order that the buying or building process will be smooth and less stressful. The various types of homes that you may own includes:

Production homes

BUILDING DREAMS

Production homes, as the name implies, are the manufactured homes that most real estate developers usually sell. With a few available models, usually about three or four to choose from, you can buy these homes "off the shelf," that is, what you see is what you get. Some of these homes are "bare" units and you have the option of doing the interior decoration yourself. There are production builders who offer different levels of finishes.

Production homes can be the easiest to purchase since they come in selected models and all you have to do is select the model that will suit your needs and that of your family. They are usually affordable since the seller or developer has the benefit of volume production or economies of scale.

Builders use the same plans over and over so they can become very good and efficient in producing these homes. A developed subdivision follows an architectural design theme so that the houses can blend with each other. For you to have an idea on how the finished units will look like, different house models are usually shown to you complete with the interior decoration, furniture, lighting fixtures and appliances.

Custom-built homes

The theme and floor layout that you wish for is followed in the custom home. It starts by engaging the services of a designer and telling him or her all of your requirements. You get to choose the materials to be used, the specific location of the rooms and even the sizes of the rooms. If there is a specific style that you may want—Victorian, Spanish, Mexican, Mediterranean or any specific style—you can have it in a custom home. A custom-built home requires that you spend time studying the design since you cannot preview how it will look like in a model home.

Your professional relationship with your designer and builder is very critical since you will be working together with them for about a year. Expect that custom-built homes are more expensive than production or semi-custom homes and the construction time usually takes longer.

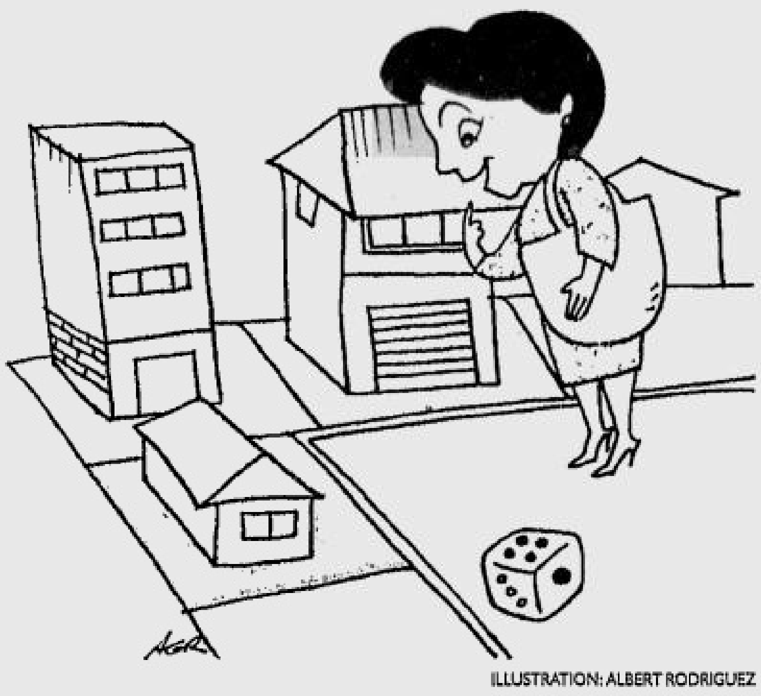

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Semi-custom homes

Semi-custom homes are homes that are built in a limited quantity and the developer or builder can accommodate minor changes. It is important though that you purchase these homes prior to their completion so that design changes can be done at the minimum cost.

This type of home is common for pocket developers or small volume builders. The color of the house interior or even the exterior can be selected as construction work progresses. Semi-custom homes are a cross between the production and custom home.

Townhouses

Usually located in areas in which the cost of land is high, townhouses are individual housing units that are attached to each other. The units are commonly separated by a common firewall and the entire area has a common architectural theme. Some townhouses have a common area where the facilities such as a clubhouse, swimming pool and a basketball court are located.

Townhouses are usually near schools and commercial districts and are very accessible to main roads and public transportation.

Condominiums

Condominiums became popular in the '60s and were developed to accommodate urban living in areas in which the cost of land was high and building a single-detached house seemed economically impossible. It has a different concept of ownership—absolute ownership of the condominium unit and co-ownership of the land and common spaces. Parking spaces are most of the time bought separately for most condominiums. A Condominium Certificate of Title evidences ownership of a condominium unit.

> You have a lot of choices when it comes to deciding on what type of residential property to buy

Condominiums are located in business districts and accessibility to one's place of work is a common criterion in opting to live in one. They are usually high-rise, although a row of houses can also be a condominium. The condominium association in which all unit owners automatically become members manages the operation and management of the common spaces and utilities.

Mix-use infrastructure

Mix-use infrastructure consists of combined residential and commercial dwellings. For commercial areas, the units are for commercial use on the ground up to a few floors and then convert into residential use at the higher floors.

Mix-use dwellings can also be possible for medium-rise buildings in which the occupants live on the upper floors and their businesses are located at the ground floor. This type of setup is very common among self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs.

Used homes

Used homes (or condominiums, townhouses) are another option. You can buy them at a lower price and then renovate or repair them.

When buying a used car, buyers usually bring with them a mechanic to give an opinion on the overall mechanical condition of the car. In buying a used home, it is prudent that you bring along a design or construction professional who will give you a technical assessment of the property.

Knowing how much the repairs will cost prior to your purchase would give you an idea on the total cost of the property. Sometimes, tearing down the property and building a new one might be more economically feasible than repairing it.

Final advice—You have a lot of choices when it comes to deciding on what type of residential property to buy. Each type offers advantages as well as disadvantages. Assessing fully your real needs and how a specific property will satisfy these needs is a very important aspect of having your dream home.

Timberpro shares 'win-win' solution

"IF I don't stop the problem of termites in your house, I will repair termite damage for free." This is Robert Facuri's bold challenge to homeowners to demonstrate that he means business.

Facuri started his termite and pest management firm Timber Protection and Maintenance Services Inc. (Timberpro) in the late '70s when the industry was having a bad reputation because of operators who did not always have the best interest of the clients in mind. To treat infestation problems, some unscrupulous practitioners would quote bargain-basement prices, then mix soap with water and use it in structures in the homes of unsuspecting homeowners.

Facuri thought that to gain back the trust of the public, pest controllers would have to let themselves get penalized if they don't do a good job. And thus was born Timberpro's unique selling proposition—the "restoration commitment"—a clause that guarantees free repair of damaged structures within the warranty period.

"The customer knows that the pest control operator will make sure to do a good job or else, he will lose a lot of money," he points out. Other companies don't have the confidence to implement such a strategy, he asserts, because they don't do a very thorough job.

He may not have finished his mechanical engineering course but his business grew because he did renege on his promise. The businessman who started out doing door-to-door selling eventually land clients from posh villages like Dasmariñas, Forbes Park and Alabang. He became president of the Pest Exterminators Association and helped established standards to protect customers, which the industry now routinely follows.

Safe baiting system

Timberpro is an authorized operator of Sentricon Termite Colony Elimination System, a sophisticated anti-termite baiting technology that is being used to protect the White House, the Statue of Liberty and thousands of homes and property across Asia, Europe, Australia and the United States. Facuri says "Sentricon is the safest in the market and I've seen it work well. Some liquid termiticides are not as effective as the baiting system of Sentricon. To illustrate the efficacy of baiting he recalls his teenage years when a sister left a candy on his bed. Ants picnicked on his bed as he lay sleeping and crept inside his ears, causing him much pain. Without asking for help, he thought of placing sugar at the opening of his ear to draw the ants out. "And it worked!" he says, smiling.

Facuri knows that Sentricon has its own place in the industry. "Of course it is not inexpensive like traditional chemicals but the question we ask for our clients is 'You want the cheap one or the one that will work?'" The entry of Sentricon in the local scene brought with it a slew of positive changes in the industry. Dow AgroSciences, the US-based manufacturer of Sentricon, has implemented a strict authorization process and provides continuous training to its partner pest controllers. The result, Facuri notes, is a level, more professional playing field.

Mentoring employees

He mentions that there is now a strategy that is emerging in the business world, the "win-win" solution. In the past, pest control operators would offer good services and products to clients and they are in turn rewarded with thousands of pesos worth of contracts and customer loyalty. But there is now a much better deal: the new "win-win" cycle includes the manufacturer of the technology. In the new equation, the supplier provides pest control operators with good products at good prices, which they can pass on to the customers. At day's end, the manufacturer is happy because of increased sales; the pest con guy is happy because business is good; and the customer is happy because he gets so much value from the services and the products.

The book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey is a bible in the Timberpro workplace. When the 1997 Asian economic slump caused many corporations to nosedive, Facuri changed his work style to adjust to the worsened business condition. He would come in at 5 a.m. so his productive time in the office is extended. Today, Timberpro runs 24/7 even during holidays to cater to establishments that can only be pest-treated after they close ("when everybody is sleeping, we're earning money," he jokes).

To prepare his people for higher responsibilities, the company instituted a cross-training program that lets the manager of a particular department run the entire office operation for a day, every once in a while. This way, each manager knows the goings on in the other departments, is able to make suggestions to improve the workflow and everyone develops a holistic appreciation of the enterprise.

Other passions

Pointing to a framed photograph of a rustic scene on the wall, he says: "That's Batanes where I grew up. As a young Ivatan boy I would wake up and find fishes tied to our window, and we never knew who gave them. I learned that when you do good deeds for others, good things come to you, too."

He lives this lesson by performing free community fogging. Projects like this make residents become more aware of pest problems and because of this, village residents turn to Timberpro to keep household pests at bay. "But when you give, give without thinking what you can get in return," he counsels.

His other passions include golf and handgun shooting, which he excelled in. Facuri has been invited on several occasions in the last 20 years to teach SWAT teams and social group like the rotary and gun shows the art and science of handgun shooting, for free. Sunday is family day and is spent bonding with his family. His eldest son Timothy who opted to work in Timberpro after graduation a year ago is now rising as junior manager from the ranks. His wife Jean Marie is executive vice president of Timberpro.

Some 25 years since he first made his "free repair" overture, Facuri's Timberpro has served thousands of satisfied customers nationwide and has treated not just homes but offices, hotels, churches, schools, food outlets, and even ships at sea.

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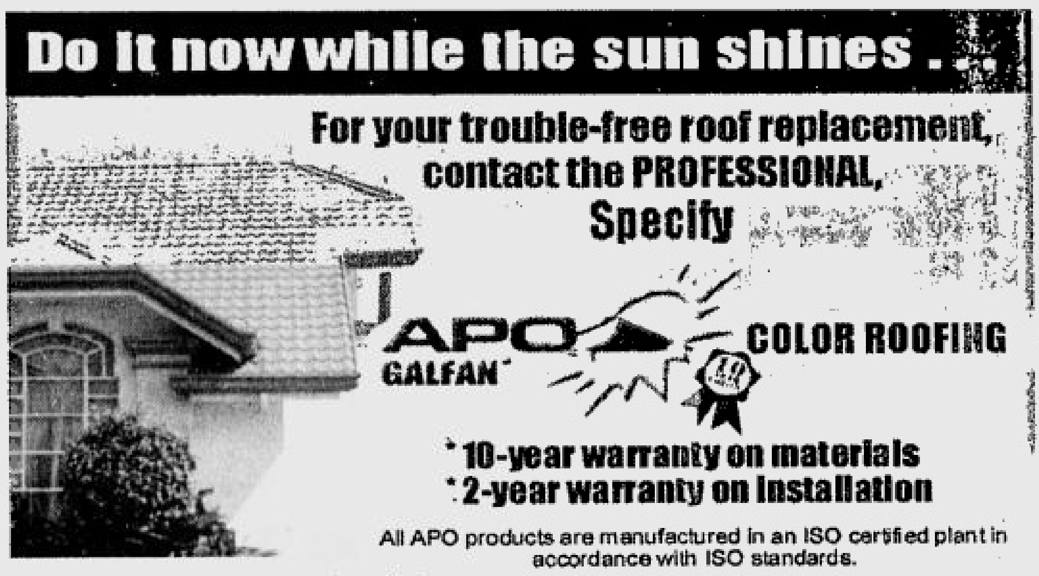

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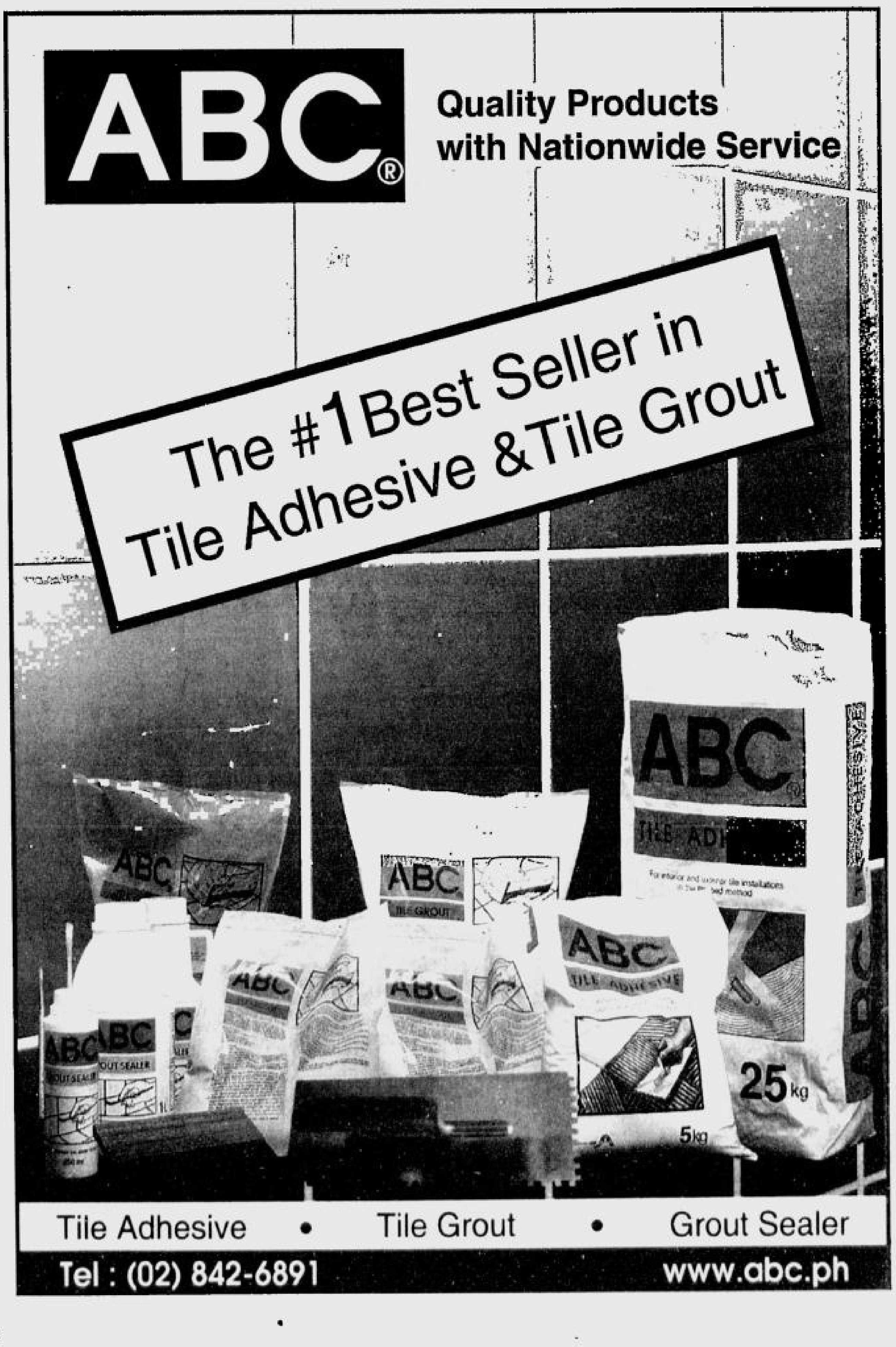

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TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2003

RATE
P245 per column centimeter
(All prices exclusive of E-VAT)

DEADLINE
for reservations / cancellations / corrections
Monday to Sunday
12:00 noon
Day before publication

I believe that I shall see the goodness
Of the Lord in the land of the living
Psalm 27:13

LILIA SANTOS VILLA

In peace and grace joined
Our Lord Father on
26 April, 2003 at the age of 78

Her loving husband **Retired Overall Deputy Ombudsman Justice Francisco Agrava Villa**; her grateful and loving children, **Angie** and **Joseph, Vickie** and **Rafael, Evelyn, Cordie, Jun, Charie** and **Pammy** and **Ed** and grandchildren **Joanne** and **Jay; Mishie, Gaston, Sonsoles** and **Raphael; Laurea; Ann Gabrielle** and **Alonzo**; her siblings **Pacquing, Florencia(†); Ligaya, Roman Jr, Pedro, Porfirio (†); Alma, Celia, Benjamin** and **Arturo**; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

She lies in state at the Baltazar Chapel in Funeraria Paz in the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque.

Interment schedule to be advised.

"I am the RESURRECTION and the LIFE... He who believes in ME will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."
John 11:25-26

CARLOS ALMEDA VALENCIA

of Tanauan, Batangas
Peacefully joined his Creator at the age of 70 on April 26, 2003.

His bereaved wife **ADELINA MENDOZA VALENCIA**; loving children **EDWIN & SUSAN, CARLOS JR., MA. ANGELICA**; grandchild **MARIA ARIANNA**; parents **AURELIO (†) AND PASTORA (†)**; brothers and sisters **MELCHOR (†), GUILLERMA (†) & HERBERT MELENDEZ, FRANCISCO & NYDIA, MANUEL (†), ANTONIO (†), ROMEO (†), NELIA & MANING BLEZA, JOSEFINA, CECILIA & TOM KRAMER, BENJAMIN & RENEE** and other brothers and sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS in Sucat, Parañaque. He will be laid to rest on Thursday, May 1, 2003 at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat after the necrological mass at 9:00 a.m.

"You will forever be in our hearts, DAD."

ATTY. JOSE VILLAREAL NAVARRA

Peacefully joined his Creator on April 28, 2003 at the age of 83.

His loving children **Jose Jr. & Julie, Fides Marcia, Joel & Abigail, John Pio & Caridad, Josette, Jacques & Jean** and **Jasmine**; grandchildren **Jolina, Chuckie, Bien, Joy, Jill, JC, Niño, Camille, Joanne** and **Jason**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 3, 2003 at Forest Park, Novaliches, Kalookan City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Sto. Niño Parish, Pandacan, Manila.

" Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened
and I will give you rest."

Eduarda "Maring" Cuyugan Vda. de Lacson

Peacefully joined our Lord on April 27, 2003 at the age of 86.

Her loving children **Herman, Mila** (+), **Tony Boy** (+), **Ana** and **Ginny**; sister-in-law **Carmelita B. Cuyugan**; sons and daughter-in-law, grandchildren and great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Chapel, Magallanes Village, Makati City on April 27-29 and ALISBO Funeral Homes, Mandalagan, Bacolod City.

Interment will be on Thursday morning, May 1, 2003.

MAURA "ORANG" REYES SAMSON

Born in San Miguel, Bulacan on January 15, 1908
Peacefully joined her Creator on April 27, 2003
At the age of 95

Her loving husband **Mateo (†)**; children **Bet & Sally, Joe (†) & Ito, Butch & Dades, Tony & Lou, Linda**; grandchildren **Bernie & Phat, BJ, Barbie & Tom, Tricie & Peter, Francis, Tin-Tin, Allan & MaryAnne, Benjie, Tina, Desi, Mikey & Lou**; nephews, nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, May 1, 2003 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church.

In memory of a devoted wife, a loving mother,
a dedicated friend and an inspiring symbol
of patience and fortitude...

VIRGINIA "Nini" SY GRAPILON

January 03, 1949 - April 29, 2001
on her 2nd Death Anniversary

JAG, sons **René** and **Raul**, daughter-in-law **Miranda de Quiroz**, parents **Santos** (†) and **Esperanza Sy**, brother **Danilo**, sisters **Mely** and **Ely**, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
Matthew 10:39

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT
MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY
REQUIEMS
FREE OBIT DESIGN

Our Dearly Beloved Daddy

GUY F. DONATO, Sr.

Now peacefully rests in the infinite
Grace & Goodness of the Lord
on the 26th of April 2003 at the age of 64.

He is survived by his loving wife **Priscilla**; children **Dan & Christian Gonzales, Gigiboi & Bong, Mark & Tess**; grandchildren **Andrei, Martin & Daniel, Gabriel, Casey & Raphael, Pia & Aya**; his sister **Cecile** & brothers **Joe & Robert**, brothers & sisters-in-law; nephews & nieces.

His remains lie in state at the Tanguile Chapel, La Funeraria Paz (inside Manila Memorial Park), Sucat, Parañaque City.

Cremation will be on Thursday, May 1, 2003 after the 10:00 A.M. Mass at the Tanguile Chapel.

The family is grateful to the pious readers for their prayers.

DEATH NOTICES

Lt. Col. Julian B. Managuelod
Joined his Creator on
April 24, 2003.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Quezon City.

Interment will be on May 1, 2003.

Engr. Nevelo Gensoli
Joined our Lord on
April 25, 2003.

His remains lie in state at the Don Bosco Chapel, Pasay Road, Makati City.

Interment will be on May 1, 2003.

Manuel B. Javier
Joined his Creator on
April 22, 2003.

His remains lie in state at ELK Grove, Sacramento, USA.

Interment will be on April 30, 2003.

Eliseo V. Diestro
Joined his Creator
on April 26, 2003.

His body lies in state at Marian Memorial Chapels, Marcos Hi-Way, Antipolo City.

Interment is tentatively scheduled on May 2, 2003.

Dr. Mariano F. Pascual, MD
Joined his Creator
on April 25, 2003.

His remains lie at their residence at 130 Baesa, Quirino Highway, Quezon City.

Interment will be today, April 29, 2003 at 2:00 p.m.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

EGIDIO CALANGIAN ANDAYA

Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord
on April 26, 2003.

His bereaved family, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel K of La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 3, 2003 at Meycauayan Memorial Park after the celebration of the Holy Mass at 9:00 a.m.

OBITUARIES

Message of Thanks

We, the family and relatives of the late

EMILIA BARSANA AGUDO

who joined her Creator on April 23, 2003

sincerely convey our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who offered Masses and prayers, visited and kept vigil, sent flowers, attended the funeral rites and condoled with us in our moment of grief.

FRANCISCO MERCADO ANACLETO, SR.

Died peacefully on April 27, 2003 at the age of 67.

His loving wife **Carmelita**; sons **Jun & Dennis**; daughters **Marivic** and **Fe**; grandchildren **Milet, Wyatt** and **Jason** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Nacional Memorial Homes (Chapel 2-C) at G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, May 1, 2003 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina after the 7:30 a.m. Mass.

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INTERMENT NOTICE

Name	Date of Interment	Time	Place of Interment	Place of Wake
EDWIN L. ESPALDON	April 27	2:00 PM	Holy Gardens Memorial Park Taytay, Rizal	198 Ortigas Ave. Ext. Rosario, Pasig City
ELVIRA C. SEBALLE	April 30	9:00 AM	Holy Gardens Memorial Park Angono, Rizal	Tayuman Central Binangonan, Rizal
LUZ REYCASA BUENPACIFICO	April 30	3:00 PM	Holy Gardens Memorial Park Taytay, Rizal	Tramo cor. Mercedez St. Pasig City
SIMEON C. STA. ANA	April 27	2:00 PM	Holy Gardens Valley Memorial Park Antipolo City	161 M. Roxas St. Calumpang, Marikina City
CHITO VILLANUEVA	April 29	1:00 PM	Holy Gardens Greenhills Memorial Park Calamba City	819 L19 Manili Kapayapaan Ville, Cantubang, Laguna
POLICARPIO M. OCHOCO	May 03	1:00 PM	Holy Gardens Memorial Park Angono, Rizal	13 Kalmito St. Aurora Subd. Angono, Rizal

Send or post your e-condolences, e-prayers & e-masses @ www.holygardens.com
E-mail address: sales@holygardens.com
www.holygardens.com

OUR BELOVED

ATTY. LEANDRO "TOTOY" CARLOS SEVILLA

San Miguel, Bulacan and Quezon City
March 22, 2003

We the beneficiaries of his love, nieces, nephews and relatives– wish to show our gratitude to the LORD by offering the Mass of Resurrection for the eternal repose of his soul. We wish to invite all on the 40th day of his demise.

Mass will be celebrated at OUR LADY OF THE ABANDON CHURCH, STA. ELENA MARIKINA CITY at 7:30 A.M. on APRIL 30, 2003.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority (NFA) invites all interested Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the increase in floor elevation and improvement of the drainage system of the 200,000 Cavans Capacity NFA Warehouse in Molave, Zamboanga del Sur. The project has an approved budget of P5,617,739.00 and contract duration of 150 calendar days.

The work calls for the supply of labor, materials, machinery, tools and equipment including supervision in the complete execution of the project.

Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "Pass/Fail," criteria and only Eligible Bidder shall be invited by NFA in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the contractor's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Postqualification before an award is made. Bid prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.

Eligibility Forms are available for issuance at the NFA Regional Office, Zamboanga City on **May 14-15, 2003**, only upon submission of a Letter of Intent, presentation of the original or authenticated renewal of Contractor's License, Certificate of Good Standing from CIAP and payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00

One original and two photocopies of the duly accomplished eligibility statements must be submitted at NFA Regional Office not later than **May 23, 2003**.

Bid documents shall be issued to eligible contractors on **May 30, 2003** also at the Regional Office, only upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P4,000.00.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on **June 11, 2003**, 2:00 P.M. at the NFA Regional Office, Conference Hall, Gov. Ramos Ave., Zamboanga City.

Deadline for submission of bids is on **June 27, 2003** at 1:15 P.M. after which the opening of bids shall immediately follow. Venue is at the NFA Regional Office, Conference Hall, Zamboanga City.

All particulars relative to Bid Security, Performance Security and bidding procedures shall be governed by the provisions of Executive Order No. 40 and its Approved Implementing Rules and Regulations and as indicated in the Tender Documents.

NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY/INFORMALITY OF THE BIDS RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS WHICH ARE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY.

(Sgd.) **ERNESTO M. MACASINAG**
Regional Director

(PDI – April 29 & May 6, 2003)

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL
6th Flr., Atrium Bldg., Makati Ave., Makati City

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND SUBMIT PROPOSAL

The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), pursuant to Proclamation No. 284 series of 2002 designating it as the administrator of the 7-hectare property in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig which was reserved for the AFP Off-base Housing, hereby invites all interested contractors duly licensed by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) with Large "B" category for General Building to prequalify and submit proposals for the Master Planning, Design, Construction and Financing under a turnkey contractual arrangement of the AFP Off-base Housing Project.

Interested parties may obtain the prequalification documents from the office of the HUDCC Vice Chairman, 8th Flr., Atrium Bldg., Makati Ave., Makati City, after paying the corresponding non-refundable fee of Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00). The deadline for submission of duly accomplished forms together with the required prequalification statements/documents is on **May 21, 2003**.

The HUDCC reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals, to waive any informality found therein, or to accept such proposals as may be considered advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **AMADO S. BAGATSING**
Vice Chairman, HUDCC

(PDI--April 29 & May 6, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Science and Technology
PHILIPPINE NUCLEAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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Telephone Nos. 929-6010 to 19 *Fax No.* 920-1646

INVITATION TO APPLY ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI) is inviting all interested bidders/contractors for our forthcoming public bidding for the following:

1. **REHAB. AND UPGRADING OF ARC GRD. FLR., NORTH WING ARC BLDG.**
   Approved Budget **P3,000,000.00**
2. **JANITORIAL SERVICES FOR CY 2003 (JULY-DECEMBER)**
   Approved Budget **P873,102.00**
3. **SECURITY SERVICES FOR CY 2003 (JULY-DECEMBER)**
   Approved Budget **P1,260,000.00**

Issuance of Eligibility requirements : MAY 5, 2003
Pre-bid conference : To be announced later
Bidding : To be announced later

Bid document fee:

Janitorial	–	P 100.00
Security Services	–	P 200.00
Rehab & Upgrading of ARC Lab.	–	P 1,000.00

For inquiries interested parties may contact the PBAC Secretariat at Tel. Nos. 929-60-11 to 19 loc. 275 (c/o Julie Mendoza).

The Bids and Awards Committee and the Institute reserve the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect thereto, accept bids as may be deemed advantageous thereto or postpone the bidding for whatever cause it may deem proper.

In case of failure, a re-bidding shall automatically be scheduled five (5) calendar days after the announcement of failed bidding at the same time and place as the first bidding.

(Sgd.) **ALUMANDA M. DELA ROSA, Ph.D.**
Acting Director

(PDI – April 29, 2003)

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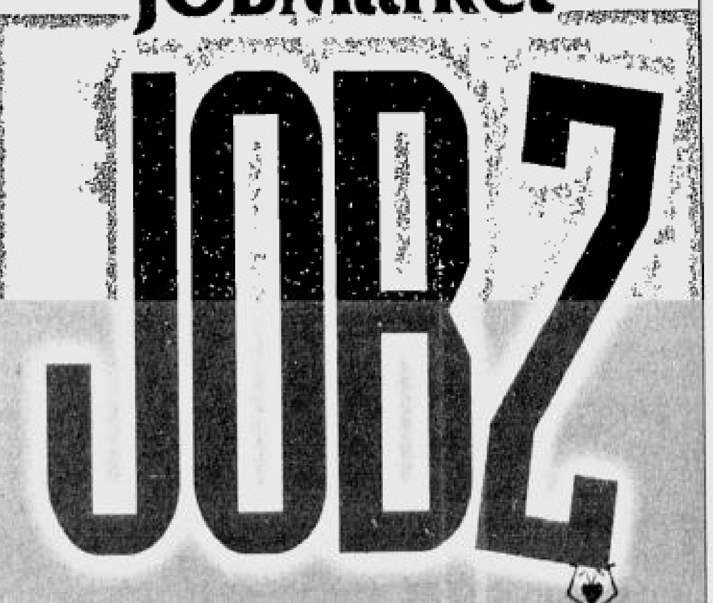

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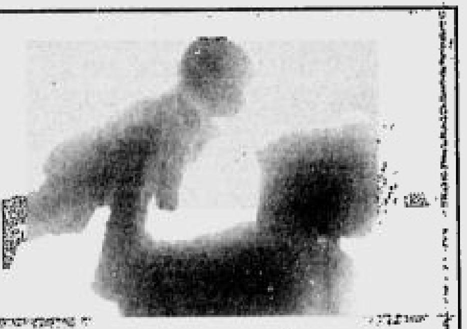

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Mommy Tess,

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BUSINESS

Asian stocks hit by Sony, SARS; oil slides

A businessman rides a bicycle in front of video boards flashing financial market prices in Tokyo. Tokyo stocks dropped Monday morning after shares fell on Wall Street Friday and market heavyweight Sony continued to decline. The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 selected issues lost 46.55 points, or 0.60 percent, to 7,652.95 points. AP

SINGAPORE—Japanese stocks plumbed fresh 20-year lows on Monday on dismay over Sony's earnings while Taiwan shares slumped as the economic damage from the SARS virus pressured Asian markets.

Oil prices headed towards five-month lows after Iran underlined worries about excess supplies by saying an Opec production agreement would hardly cut output at all.

The Tokyo stock market continued to swoon in the face of last week's disappointing earnings report from consumer electronics giant Sony Corp., whose shares sank 15 percent.

The Nikkei average fell 1.2 percent to 7,607.88, its lowest close in two decades.

"Sony's numbers were surprising to me and everyone in the market. I don't think the stock has reached a bottom here," said Kiyoshi Yamanaka, portfolio manager at T&D Asset Management. "I really don't know how far it is going to fall."

Sony fell by its daily 500 yen limit for a second session, diving to 2,720 yen, its weakest in over seven years. That marked a drop of more than a quarter from before its first-quarter earnings statement on Thursday.

Other Asian stock markets were grappling with the economic fallout of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), with the Taipei market falling 2.2 percent to its weakest close in six months.

Australian stocks lost 0.9 percent on worries about the impact of SARS on the country's Asian trading partners and a 1.6 percent fall in US blue-chips on Friday.

Shares in China, where the virus is thought to have originated, were also weaker.

But stocks in Hong Kong and Singapore were little changed at midday as falling infection rates offered some relief from weeks of worry. The World Health Organization said SARS had peaked in both territories.

"Locally consumer sentiment is improving slightly. People are coming back on the streets to go shopping," said Y.K. Chan, investment strategist at VC CEF Brokerage in Hong Kong, where the Hang Seng Index steadied after hitting a four-and-a-half-year low at the start of trade.

South Korean stocks climbed 0.4 percent, but gains were capped by worries about SARS and North Korea's nuclear program.

US light crude oil slid 1.4 percent to $25.90 a barrel, approaching lows last seen in November, after an Opec agreement on Thursday made a smaller than expected cut in extra supplies pumped during the Iraq war.

Iran on Friday conceded that the 10 Opec countries now pumping oil will hardly reduce output at all from June, when the agreed "cut" is due to take effect.

The dollar was under pressure from worse than expected US growth data and falls in Wall Street stocks on Friday.

US first-quarter gross domestic product grew 1.6 percent, below analysts' forecasts for around 2.3 percent.

The dollar was quoted around 120 yen down from 120.31 in late US trade on Friday. The euro stood at $1.1062, near a six-week high, against Friday's $1.1037. *Reuters*

EXPORTS IN PERIL

As China coughs, E. Asia catches cold

SINGAPORE—A weakening of China's economy by the SARS outbreak could weigh down on the rest of East Asia because of China's growing importance as a key export market for its neighbors, analysts said.

Intra-regional trade is also seen to suffer as the region's strongest economies like Hong Kong and Singapore are ravaged by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) health scare.

As the extent of the infections are unmasked in China, accused of covering up the initial outbreak in November and allowing the virus to spread worldwide, economists are reviewing growth projections and the ramifications on future investments.

A survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit of Asia Pacific business executives showed 68 percent now viewed China more negatively as a business center than before the SARS epidemic, with 56 percent saying their confidence in Hong Kong has also been dented.

"SARS-related worries about China, where the disease is believed to have originated, are dimming Asia's outlook due to China's growing importance as a key importer of Asian goods," Singapore's DBS Bank said in a commentary.

"China's weaker growth is especially hard on Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia," according to US investment giant Citigroup, which cut its 2003 gross domestic product (GDP) forecast for China to 6.7 percent from 7.6 percent.

Rather than being a competitor, China's importance as a destination for Asian goods has been expanding, especially after the slowdown in the US, Japanese and European economies.

DBS Bank said China accounted for 39.3 percent of Hong Kong's exports in 2002, up from 36.9 the previous year. Exports to China by Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand also expanded in the same year.

Trade within East Asia could also suffer from SARS, and could inflict a further blow to slumping exports to the US, Japan and Europe.

"With both external and regional trade hurt, Asia is suffering from a severe double whammy," DBS said, adding the June quarter could be the worst for the region this year.

The World Bank said in a recent report that the most important source of export growth in East Asia was the expansion of intra-regional trade, especially in shipments to China. *AFP*

Fed's Greenspan may be cautiously optimistic

WASHINGTON—The US economic recovery has yet to come into bloom and any number of uncertainties—geopolitical and otherwise—lurk in the woods, but Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has a few reasons for guarded optimism about the future.

For one thing, the 77-year-old Fed chief's own job security is no longer in doubt.

Greenspan's current term at the helm of the world's most powerful central bank expires in mid-2004 but President George W. Bush last week signaled an intention to renew it.

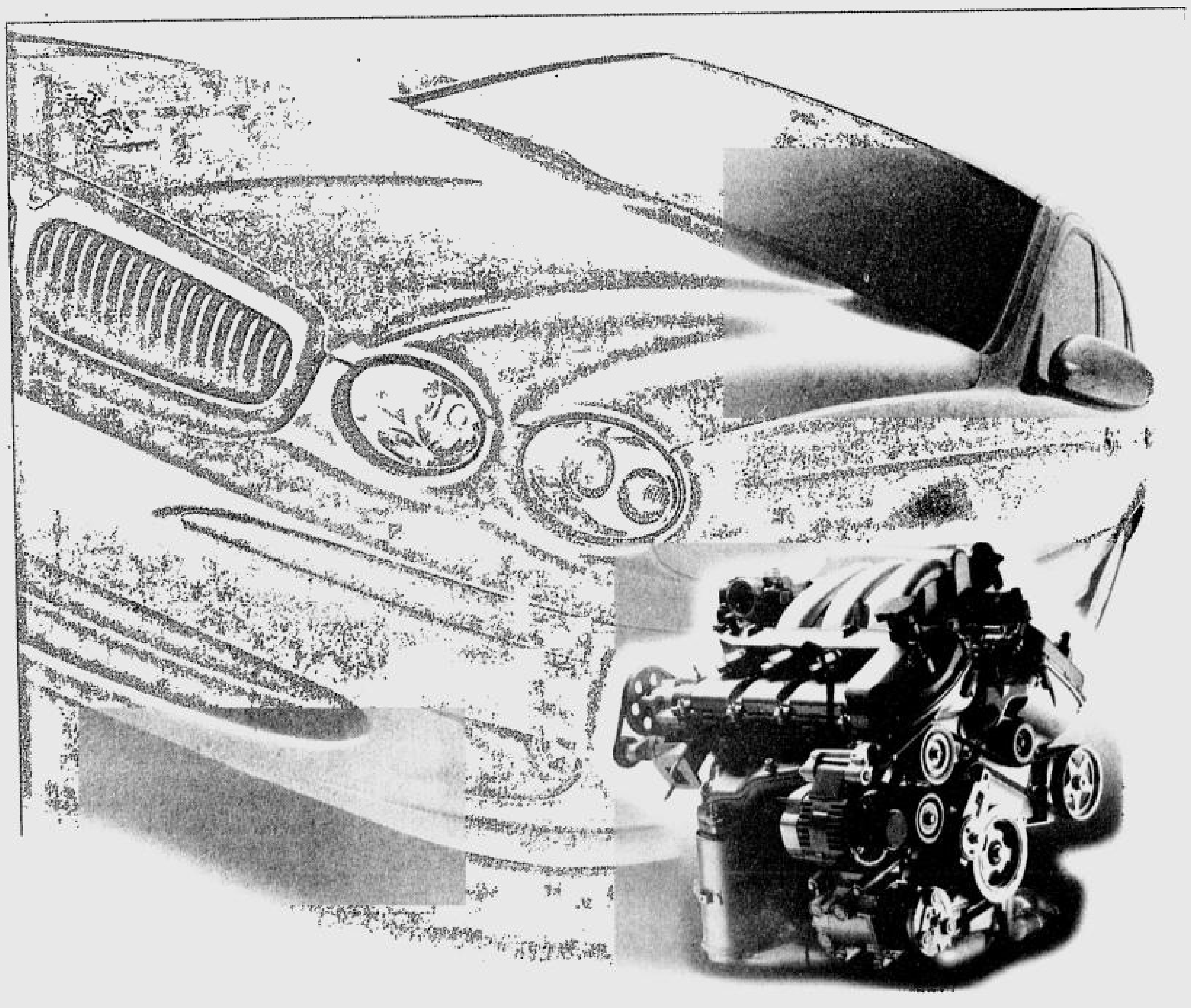
On the economic front, first-quarter growth was slow, but glimmers of hope surfaced last week with a reported jump in consumer confidence and a pickup in durable goods orders.

The Fed chairman may highlight such positive signs when he testifies this week before the House of Representatives Financial Services Committee on monetary policy, a subject that always commands the world's ear.

But the ever-cryptic Greenspan will avoid being pinned down on where interest rates are headed.

"He will leave it an open question as to what the Fed is going to do," said Ed McKelvey, an economist at Goldman, Sachs and Co. in New York. "The Fed is not disposed to easing rates, but it's not at the point of ruling that out either."

The Fed has held rates steady this year after a dozen cuts since the start of 2001. The key federal funds rate stands at a low unseen since the early 1960s. *Reuters*



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Japan store sales slip in March as fears bite

TOKYO—Sales at Japanese stores fell for the 24th straight month in March as consumers fretted over declining wages and uncertain job prospects.

Retail sales dropped 1 percent, while sales at large stores open more than a year, a measure of stores' core business, fell 2.7 percent, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Meti) said on Monday.

"There is no change in our view that sales overall are in a weak trend," a Meti official told a briefing.

He added that strong car sales pointed to some improvement but it was too early to say whether this was a trend.

The continuing fall in sales highlights the concern many Japanese feel over the prospects for wages and job security in a society where employment for many has traditionally been guaranteed for life.

At the root of the concern is the vicious circle of problems trapping the domestic economy: companies facing falling profits cut staff and wages; workers worried about jobs and pay spend less, cutting demand; demand falls so companies reduce output, hitting their profits.

Real disposable income in the first three months of this year fell 5.9 percent, the biggest drop in 29 years.

For consumers, that means cutting back spending or dipping into savings.

Figures last week showed that household spending fell 2.3 percent in March from a year earlier, the sixth straight month of declines. *Reuters*

South Korea economy seen slowing down

SEOUL—South Korea may unveil improved economic data this week, but analysts said on Monday concerns about the SARS virus and North Korea's nuclear threat were likely to put pressure on the authorities to devise a stimulus package.

South Korea does not have any confirmed cases of the flu-like epidemic that has sickened China and its neighbors, but slowing economies in the region would inevitably dent South Korea's export-driven economy, the fourth largest in Asia, they said.

China, Hong Kong and Taiwan absorb about a quarter of South Korea's exports, which accounted for more than half of the country's 6.3 percent growth in gross domestic product last year, according to government data.

Consumer price data for April is due on Wednesday and is expected to be lower than the 1.2 percent rise in March. April trade figures the next day are expected to show the first surplus in four months.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which has spread to more than 20 countries and killed hundreds of people, has already forced economists to cut their growth forecasts for China and countries with close ties to China.

The Asian Development Bank revised its growth forecast for the region. South Korea's growth is now forecast at 4 percent instead of the 5.5 percent previously seen.

South Korea's Finance Minister Kim Jin-pyo said on Monday in a radio program the country's economy was likely to have grown by less than the government's target of four percent in the first quarter year-on-year. A sovereign rating team from Standard and Poors began checking the health of the South's economy on Monday. *Reuters*

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LIFESTYLE
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

Fitness

The World Health Organization has given one advice: Strengthen your immune system

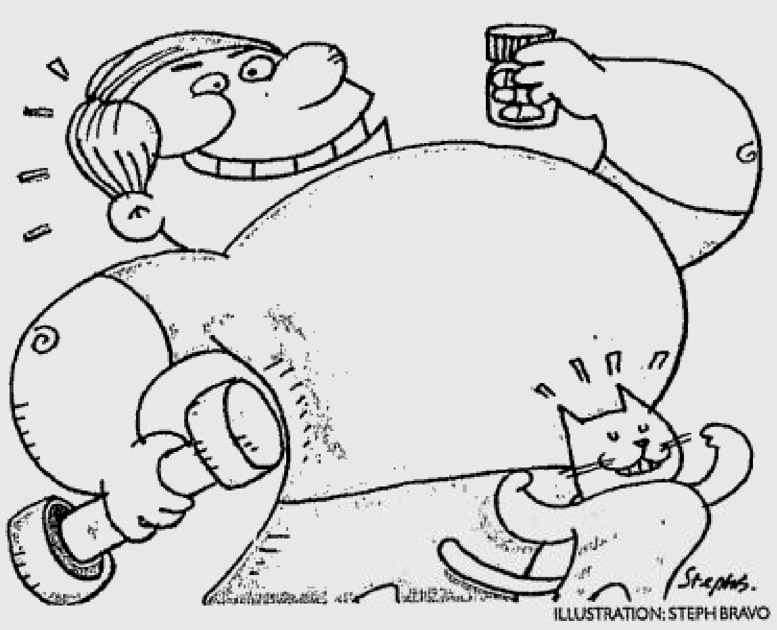

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

A healthy body is your best defense against SARS

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

WHILE the fight against disease has not abated, its urgency has never been more dramatically felt than in the last few months since the outbreak of the dreaded SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which has infected thousands and killed over 200 individuals.

As the world awaits a cure and humanity is gripped with panic, the World Health Organization prescribes one advice: Strengthen your immune system.

But how? Health books, written by doctors and nutritionists, provide some answers as well as an enlightening chat with a leading Filipino allergy-immunologist.

The immune system

This system is made of the lymph nodes, thymus gland, bone marrow, spleen, tonsils, appendix, and white blood cells. Jointly, they work to build the body's defenses versus sickness. Factors that play a key role in influencing the immune system are genetics (your family history can shed some light on your physical strengths, weaknesses and predispositions i.e. if your mother was a diabetic, you should treat yourself like one, if your father died of cancer, you should avoid carcinogenic foods), stress (your attitude towards situations and people that cause your aggravation should be controlled), lifestyle (healthy diet, regular exercise, clean environment), emotions (anger and depression can literally depress the immune system), preventive medicine (using natural and herbal approaches to preventing disease) and mind-body therapy.

Adopting a health regimen

The best defense is a strong nutritional defense. Among the vitamins that fortify the body are:

Vitamin A; Beta Carotene, which is the natural form of vitamin A; Vitamin C, which has antiviral properties and can reduce symptoms and length of infection; Bioflavonoids, which work in synergy with vitamin C; and Vitamin E–200 with mixed tocopherols, which enhances immune cell activity;

Antioxidants and herbs that contribute to cell protection and development include: Selenium, works best with vitamin E; zinc, quercetin, co-enzyme Q10, astragalus, acidophilus (live bacterial microorganisms), bayberry, DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone) Echinacea, garlic, ginseng, grapeseed extract, goldenseal glutathione, chlorella, feverfew, kelp, L-arnine, L-ornithine, mastake/shitake/raishi-mushroom, manganese, melanonin, propolis (from bees) and shark cartilage/liver oil.

It may be confusing to see such a long list, so you may consider taking a multi-vitamin-mineral supplement plus your A,C,E and Selenium like Pharmaton, which already has ginseng.

A regular exercise regimen and its health benefits cannot be overemphasized. The fact is, people who move less are more prone to illness. A daily 15 minute brisk walk can only contribute to body strength and overall wellbeing.

You have a choice—face your life and all its challenges with fear and doubt or love and courage. In short, you either embrace each day with a smile or a frown. It has been found that individuals who are able to laugh at their problems have a built-in mechanism to better cope with stress.

A doctor's opinion

According to an allergy-immunologists, Dr. Santiago Ortigas of St. Luke's Hospital (tel: 723-2301 local 6547), "All these remedies help in the context of maintaining a healthy self—to a certain degree, let's say 10%. And the remaining 90% largely depends on your immune system." He maintains that the human body is designed to fight disease "assuming one's immune system is healthy."

In order to determine if it is deficient, one must undergo an immunoglobulin test. The normal number of gamma globulin is 90-200 iu's. Gamma globulin (a biologic product extracted from the serum of the blood plasma) is given intravenously. If the person is sick,

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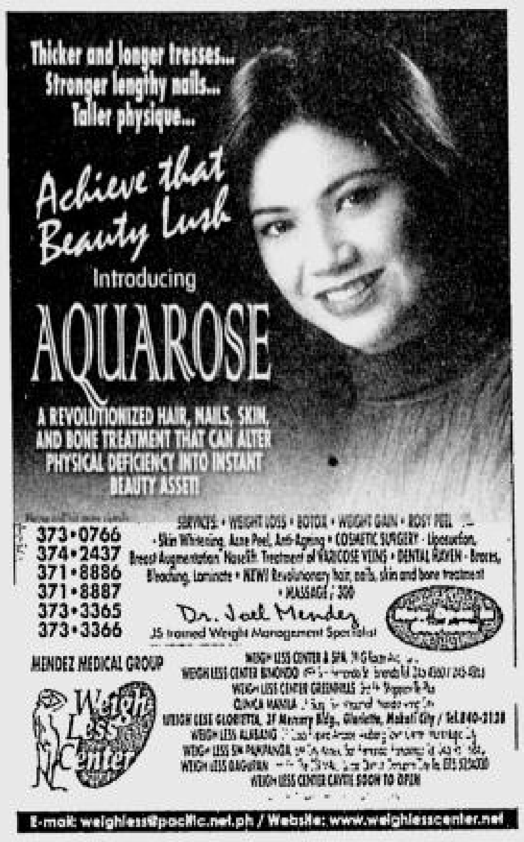

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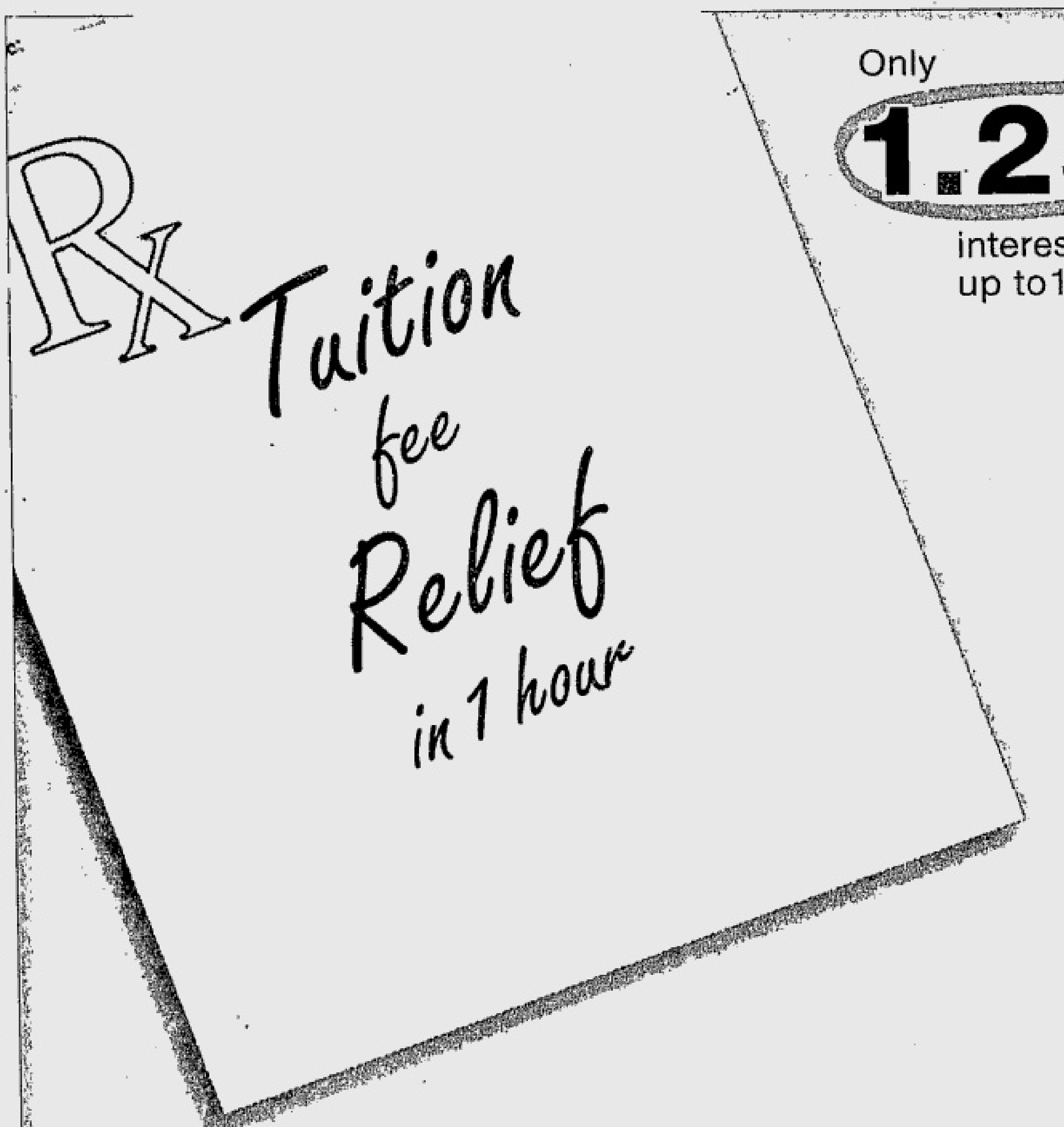

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KIDS warm up before the actual basketball sessions.

Hail to the HAL ball clinic

SOME 100 boys and girls aged 6-16 are now having the time of their lives in a basketball camp as part of the newly launched major campaign of Coca-Cola called "Healthy and Active Lifestyle" (HAL).

Fully endorsed by the Department of Health and designed primarily for the young, HAL's fundamental objective is to promote positive change in lifestyles through a daily balanced diet, proper hydration and adequate physical activity.

The camp itself is called the 2003 Coca-Cola Champions Basketball Clinic, a month-long event at the De La Salle Santiago Zobel School in Ayala Alabang that began April 1. It is patterned after the "station-type" teaching methodology utilized by major basketball clinics in the United States.

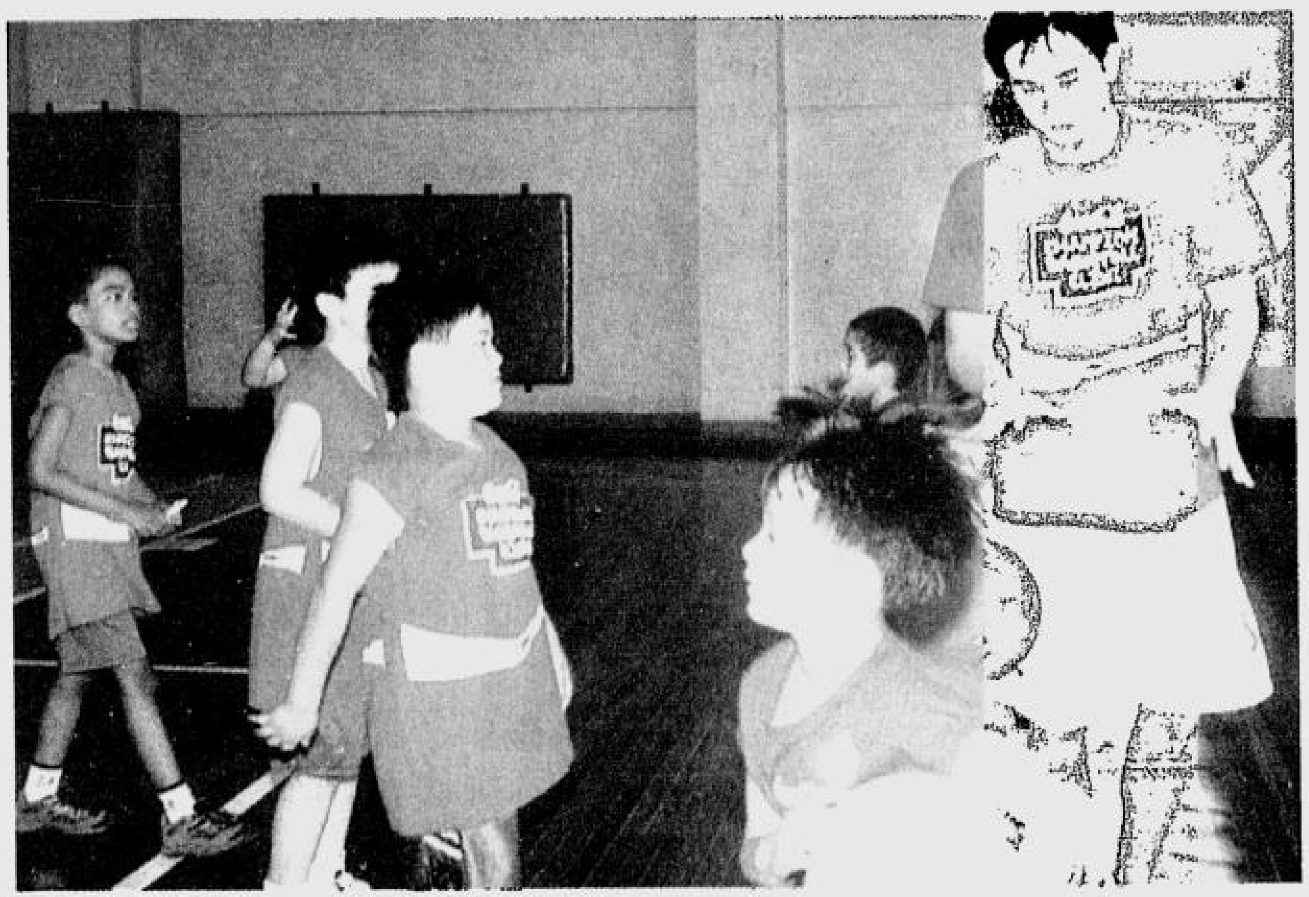
The camp's major attraction is the on-court mentoring from Tigers Johnny Abarrientos, Jeffrey Cariaso, Rudy Hatfield, Poch Juinio, Freddie Abuda, Leo Avenido, Raffy Reavis, Will Antonio, Rob Wainwright, Jojo Manalo, Ato Morano and Gec Chia.

All sessions are given hands-on by Coca-Cola Tigers head coach Chot Reyes (who's also the current PBA Coach of the Year co-awardee), along with his United States Basketball Academy-certified coaching staff.

The 2002 PBA All-Filipino champion Coca-Cola Tigers is the only rookie team to win a league championship in PBA history.

Reyes said not only the acquisition of skills but also bonding, camaraderie and teamwork were emphasized through every phase of the program.

Coca-Cola officials have envisioned the camp to reinforce a positive outlook among its participants. They expect to expand the HAL campaign, as well as the clinic, to other parts of the Philippines.



KIDS receive on-court mentoring from Tiger Gec Chia.

Take Charge Doc!
Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.
MEDICard

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FAQs (frequently asked questions)

I urgently needed to get an outpatient consultation during the last Lenten holiday season. Since most of the hospital's clinics were closed, I was told to go to the emergency room instead. I paid for my medical availments thinking that this was not part of my HMO coverage. When I referred my situation to a colleague, I was informed that it is MEDICard's SOP that outside regular clinic hours, "those urgently needed outpatient consultations" may be accommodated in a hospital's emergency room. Is this correct?

Yes, it is correct that outside regular clinic hours, such as during Sundays and holidays, members may get their *"urgently needed outpatient consultations"* at an accredited hospital's emergency room. Just don't forget to present your MEDICard ID. However, it is still best to go through outpatient care services during the regular clinic schedule so that other specialists are available in case you may be referred to one.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Internal Medicine is the chosen field of specialization of MEDICard accredited specialist **Dr. Salvador Clemente M. Eustaquio.** Dr. Buddy, as he is to colleagues and patients, finished Medicine at UERM-MMC. He also finished his residency training for his specialization and his subspecialization training for Gastroenterology at the same hospital. For consultations, members may visit his clinic at Room 212 of the Medico Bldg., The Medical City every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 9 in the morning, until 12 noon.

The Medical City Awards MEDICard as Best Performing HMO

Patient on Center Stage
Worth
HMO A
ht

THE MEDICAL CITY (TMC) conferred to MEDICard "The New Medical City Award" for Best Performing Health Maintenance Organization (2002) during its HMO Appreciation Night last April 08. Accepting the award from Dr. Alfredo R.A. Bengzon, TMC President and CEO (2nd from L) is MEDICard's EVP and General Manager, Luis S. Montoya. Also present during the recognition were (L-R) TMC's Dr. Mediadora Saniel (Head-Medical Staff Division), Virginia B. Alano (VP-Patient Care) and Benita J. Macalagay (VP-Business Division). This first ever HMO Recognition Night was held at the new site of The Medical City along Ortigas Avenue. MEDICard was among the few whom were given the opportunity to take a peek at TMC's future site. It is targeted to be operational by the 1st quarter of 2004

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

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ISO 9002

Clearing the table for Ping-Pong

By James P. Ong
Contributor

LIKE badminton, table tennis is a game Filipinos start playing at a young age, whether in the streets or the garage.

"Table tennis is the third most popular sport in the country in terms of population, after basketball and volleyball," says Victor Valbuena, president of the Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (Tatap), which is organizing the LG 9th Southeast Asian Junior Table Tennis Championship in September (it was originally set for April but rescheduled because of the SARS scare).

There are only 31 registered clubs in Tatap's website so far, although Valbuena claims the number of players nationwide comes close to 700,000 hands. The reason, he says, is its accessibility and good health benefits. He himself used to play badminton and, before that, tennis. "But in table tennis you don't get any injuries and, what's more, it doesn't discriminate in terms of size, gender or age. Do you see any 80-year-olds playing badminton?" he asks.

According to the nutristrategy.com website, playing table tennis for an hour straight can burn as much as 345 calories on a body weight of 190 pounds, although this figure is relative to body weight, intensity of workout, conditioning level and metabolism. For a 130-pound player, it's 236 calories per hour, compared to the 266 calorie burn you get from a social game of badminton.

History

Table tennis is classified as a major sport worldwide. Its exact origin is unknown, although according to an article in a recent issue of The New Yorker magazine, the word Ping-Pong, a proper noun, was coined in the late 19th century by an English sporting-goods firm which, in turn, sold the American rights to the name to Parker Brothers in 1901.

The game was popular in America for only about four years. In the 1920s, other manufacturers used the generic term "table tennis" because Ping-Pong was a registered trademark to the board-game makers.

Over the years, as table tennis became recognized as a competitive sport, the International Table Tennis Federation, its governing body worldwide, has been implementing some changes. The game is now played to 11 points instead of 21, players serve twice in a row instead of five times, and the ball is now 40 mm in diameter instead of the old 38. All these to make watching the game a more pleasurable experience for spectators.

There also used to be two categories for the kinds of paddles used—the hardbat and the sponge racquet. Now only the sponge racquets are allowed in competition, although hardbats are still available and used in recreational games.

Benefits

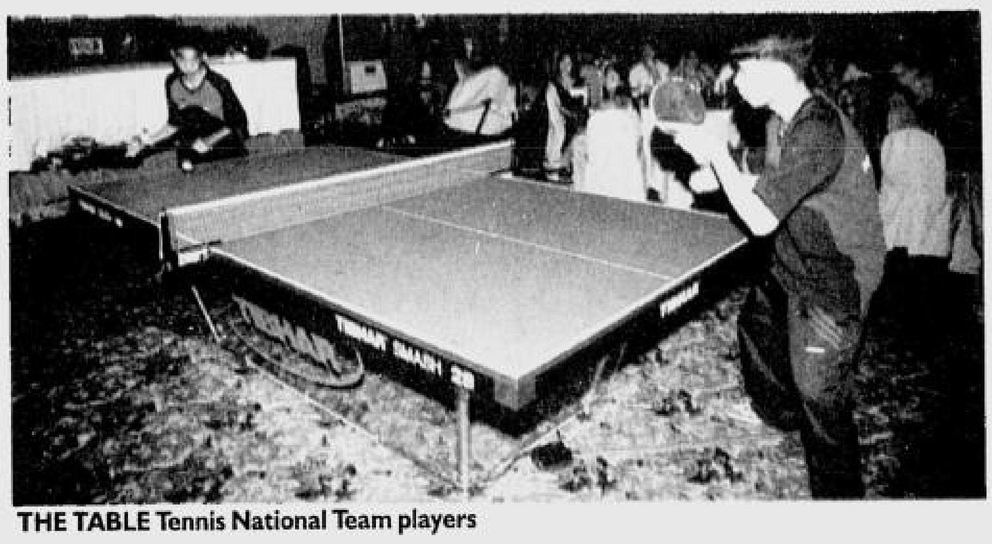
"They say it's a unique sport—like running a 100-meter dash and at the same time playing chess, because it's also very much a mind game," says Valbuena. "It emphasizes endurance and reflexes, and offers complete physical fitness. I, for one, don't go to the gym anymore because I no longer sweat from the exercises. I used to work out a lot but now I play a game for 30 minutes and change to at least two new shirts," he adds.

Unlike in Europe and other parts of Asia, where there are superstar Ping-Pong athletes, the sport here is still lacking in terms of publicity. "We need visibility to attract sponsors because we need funding to continue our mission to bring the sport to the countryside," explains Valbuena.

Tatap is indeed aggressively reaching out—to all ends of the social spectrum. It has convinced the exclusive Manila Polo Club to put three Ping-Pong tables for its members. And for the first time in its 50-year history, it's been holding monthly tournaments nationwide, from Baguio to Davao.

It is also trying to convince a potential sponsor, a telecommunications company, that there are close to a million table tennis enthusiasts in the country.

"Our goal is to eventually have a training center for our athletes. I also want to see table tennis halls all over Metro Manila, the way there are basketball courts everywhere. Let's face it, we don't stand a chance in basketball, we don't have the height. Table tennis is the way to go, this is a lifetime sport," he says.



THE TABLE Tennis National Team players

Have Lush, will travel

HANDY head-to-toe Lush products travel very well.

Lush shower gels (from 100-g bottles for P150) are formulated to gently cleanse, care for the skin and leave you glowing with health. Its variants are Back for Breakfast with sunshine fruits, lemon, lime and grapefruits; Slammer made with lime juice and honey, which helps calm and soothe skin; and Freeze, a cocktail of sea water, soothing aloe vera, and peppermint, which cools you down when you feel hot.

Lush soaps (100-g from P100 to P195) are made with the finest essential oils and fresh ingredients to gently cleanse and refresh the body. Choices include Sea Vegetable, Honey Waffle and Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

Lush bottled hair shampoos and conditioners (100-g bottle for P150) include Ibiza Party Shampoo for shine, swing and fragrance, or Coolaulin conditioner for dry, curly or processed hair, made with softening exotic fresh coconuts.

HONEY WAFFLE

HONEY Waffle soap

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FREEZE
LUSH
CHAI

FREEZE and Chai shower gels

Lush solid shampoo bars (55-g bars for P225 and P245) are formulated with fresh ingredients to remove dirt, grime and any styling product residue, and is blended with essential oils for a particular hair type or scalp. Ultimate Shine (P245) makes dull hair shiny, Irresistible Bliss (P225) for normal hair, or Jumping-Juniper (P225) for oily hair.

Baby Face Solid Facial Cleanser (P195) is a deep-cleansing facial bar made from natural butters that literally melt away dirt and grime, including sand and sea residue.

Lush is exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists Inc. Lush boutiques are at Glorietta 4 Makati and The Power Plant Mall in Rockwell.

Summer is asthma season for kids

MANY parents attest that their asthmatic children become most vulnerable to flare-ups during summer because warm weather is known to further irritate their already sensitive airways.

Dry air and high humidity also promote the spread of various allergens like pollens, molds, dust mites and animal dander, thus increasing their sensitivities to such dangerous attack.

Vigorous outdoor summer activities not only demand high levels of physical exertion but also prolonged exposure to the threats of air pollution and other allergens. As a result, lung function is further reduced making their breathing shallow, rapid and uncomfortable.

Once uncontrolled, recurrent asthma attacks may not only disrupt their summer vacation but also require frequent medication, doctor's care and even hospitalization.

Nonetheless, these can be avoided or quickly reversed with several preventive measures. When playing outside, it will be helpful for kids to wear a dust mask to avoid direct contact with allergens. Parents should also immediately change their children's outdoor clothes as soon as they come into the house to prevent both ongoing exposures to allergens as well as reduce indoor dust. If a child has been outdoor for longer period of time, a brief shower is also recommended.

In case symptoms become more evident, parents must act quickly to prevent the onset of more disturbing attack. Seeking the help of a pediatrician or allergologist for effective medication or treatment is extremely important.

Healthway Medical Clinics houses a pool of highly-competent pediatricians, allergologists and other specialists who can give useful and effective advice on how parents can help their children enjoy the heat of the summer while managing their illness. Healthway also offers lung or pulmonary function tests that can easily detect airway obstruction as well as other medical tests that can give relief to people suffering from respiratory disorders.

Call 892-3731, 814-0679 or 814-0691.

A healthy body is your best defense . . .

From page C1

novel immunologic therapies are recommended like cytokine, interleukin 2 (IL2), to produce more lymphocytes (while blood cells). Interferon, which has anti-viral properties and stimulates the production of more killer cells, is given.

Preventive tips

Meanwhile, here are tips to help you prevent catching, or passing on, the virus:

1. Use a mask called N-95 (3M brand) which has a special filtration system. Gauze masks do not work.
2. Avoid crowded and enclosed places.
3. Wash your hands as often as possible.
4. Don't share your drinking or eating utensils with anyone.
5. If you are quarantined, consider it your civic duty to accept it responsibly. You are not a "leper," you are an unsung "hero."
6. Report probable SARS cases immediately to health authorities.

Hope for a cure

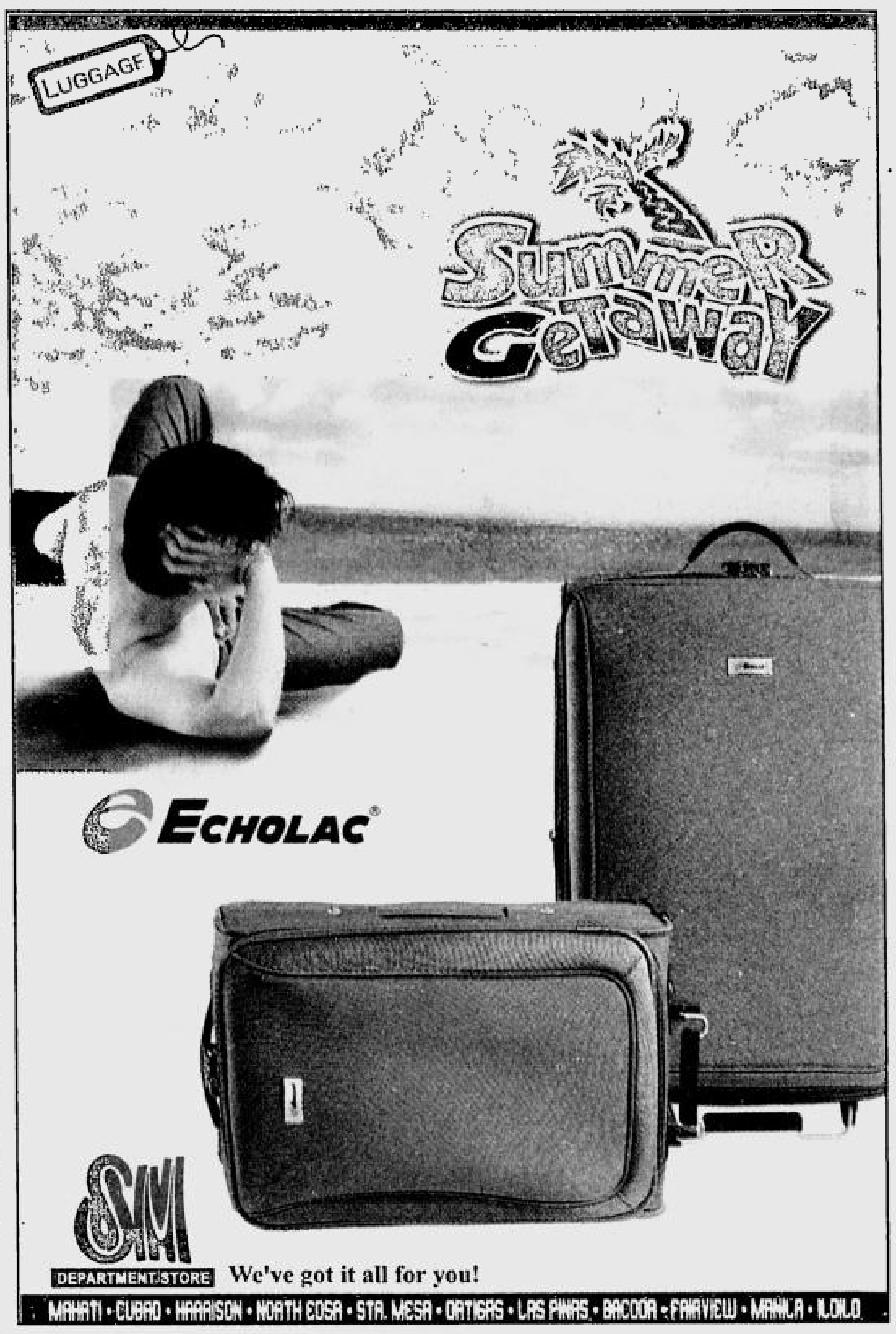
It is only a matter of time until the Center For Disease Control and the National Institute of Health in the United States discover a cure. Until then, the public is advised to follow health safety precautions.

The good news is that the disease has a 3.5-5% mortality rate while the remaining 95% are recovering, a clear indication that the human immune system is working with some help from anti-viral drugs like Rivavirin.

If you ask what determines death or survival in a person, not even the best physician in the world can fathom an answer. So I quote a cliché that is nonetheless true... only God knows.

Love and light!

E-mail the author at coryquirino_fy@yahoo.com



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Fitness

LIFESTYLE

Tapping the Web for health supplement information

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

A COLLEAGUE in the fitness industry recently told me that her husband started to feel dizzy and nauseous a couple of days after taking an herbal supplement. Lucky for him, she immediately did some research on the Web where she discovered that the US Food and Drug Administration had issued a warning against one of the herbs used in the supplement precisely because it caused the very symptoms her husband was feeling. She was appalled that a supplement containing a harmful ingredient could be sold so openly.

Unfortunately, a 1994 law in the US called the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) does not require safety testing for herbal supplements nor supplement manufacturers to report any side effects suffered by their clients (unlike pharmaceutical companies, which are required to do so by law).

The only time the FDA can pull a supplement off the shelves is when it can prove that many people have died or have been seriously injured. And that only stops that particular brand from being sold. The manufacturer can rename the product and change the formulation slightly, and it's business as usual. This also does not stop other brands with the same harmful ingredients from continuing to be sold.

Like I have been saying for the last couple of columns, the best protection you have as a consumer is to arm yourself with all the facts about a supplement.

Thank goodness, we no longer have to rely on dusty books in the local library. Searching for information over the Net can easily be done at home or in an Internet café.

Here's how to make your search for supplement info more productive.

> The Net is one source of the facts, both the positive and the negative, about any food or herbal supplement that its seller won't tell you

Search by ingredient

It is better to search by ingredient rather than just by brand name. A search for brand ABC might yield nothing untoward, yet brand XYZ, which has the same ingredients, is implicated in several deaths and serious injury. The active ingredients are the first couple of words in the ingredient listing.

If you have a special health concern, such as hypertension, diabetes or heart disease, herbal products can be dangerous for you. Make sure to find out how the product you are investigating affects people with your condition.

In a famous case in New York, Anne Marie Capati died from a stroke while exercising three months after taking an ephedra supplement that was recommended by her personal trainer.

Consider the danger in supplement-drug combinations

Health food supplements don't always mix well with pharmaceutical drugs (over-the-counter or prescription) or even with other supplements, so you also have to take into consideration what you are already taking. For example, if you are taking a blood-thinning drug, it would not be advisable to take fish oil supplements because they have a similar effect and the combination can cause internal bleeding.

Look at scientific studies

Do investigate further scientific studies that are used to back up a product's claim. You can search for the scientist's name or the scientific journal it was published in. What you usually get is an abstract of the experiment (the full text can normally only be downloaded if you are a member of the journal or association) but that is enough to take note of who the experiment was done on and what form and dosage of the supplement were used. It's important to know these two things because the results of the experiment being quoted may not have much relevance if you are not similar to the participants in the study and if the supplement is not in the same form or dosage.

Here are two examples: The supplement boron has been touted as a muscle builder for body builders but the study that is often quoted was done on menopausal women. Oral human growth hormone (HGH) supplements almost always use a 1990 study to back their claims of increasing muscle mass and strength in bodybuilders, but a closer look at the study reveals it was done on elderly men using an injectable form of HGH.

Keep an open mind

Sometimes, we swallow hook, line and sinker anything positive about the supplement but we go into denial about anything negative because in our hearts, we want the product to work and do what it says it will do.

Now, if after seriously considering the potential side effects of the product, you decide to still try it, you have made what is called an "informed decision." This means you know all the facts, positive and negative, and you are willing to take responsibility for any consequences to your health that might occur because of taking the product. That is better than just blindly buying whatever supplement comes your way.

Supplement information websites

Search engines (Google is my favorite) are my preferred way to do research, but you can start with the following websites that have extensive information on individual supplements.

http://ods.od.nih.gov/databases/ibids.html

The International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements (Ibids) is one of the most comprehensive databases for supplement information. After you click on the "search Ibids" button, choose the consumer database.

www.gssiweb.com

The Gatorade Sports Science Institute is a valuable site for athletic supplement information. All the articles are written by health professionals well-versed in the field of sports nutrition.

www.supplementwatch.com

Supplement Watch is a self-funded, privately held corporation consisting of a small group of scientists, physiologists, nutritionists and other health professionals dedicated to educating people about the pros and cons of dietary supplementation.

SEARCH RESULTS:
StephB.

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

The Association of Fitness Professionals of the Philippines will hold a series of certifications for fitness instructors May 8-11 on the following topics: Stability Ball, Core Board, Yoga and Pilates. All certifications will be conducted by ACE 2002 Instructor of the Year Lawrence Biscontini. Call Ivy Abuel at 813-6077 or text (0917) 518-1202 or (0917) 481-7063.

For past articles and exercises, go to www.tinajuanfitness.com .

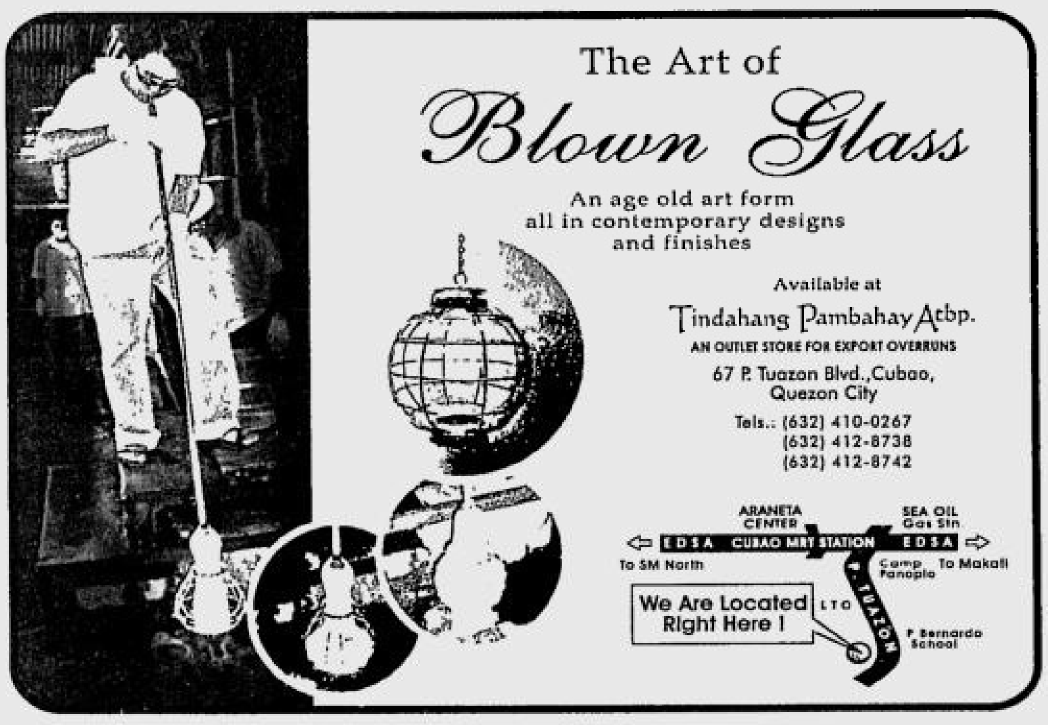
WEDDING VOCABULARY

Wedding \'wedi-in\ *n*: the act of taking a wife or husband by fomal ceremony

Formal Ceremony- formal act or series of acts prescribed by ritual, protocol or convention

Convention- an established custom especially in social matters

Wedding Works \'wedi-in 'works*n*:
1: the ultimate guide to a well orchestrated wedding celebration;
2: weekly show aired every Tuesday on ABC5 10:30-11:00pm;
3: wedding show hosted by wedding coordinator Ms. Bangs Zaldivar by Tonycar EntertainmentProductions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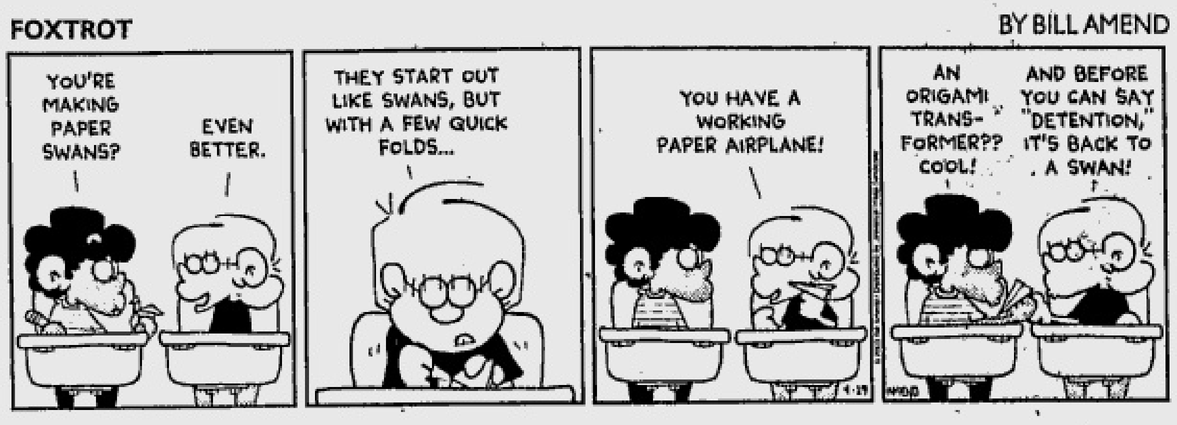
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND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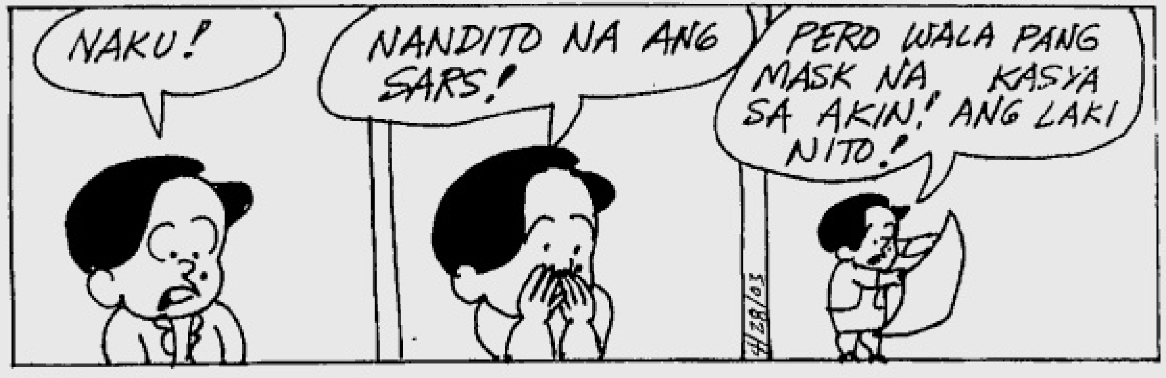
BY JESS ABRERA


NAKU!
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PERO WALA PANG MASK NA KASYA SA AKIN! ANG LAKI NITO!
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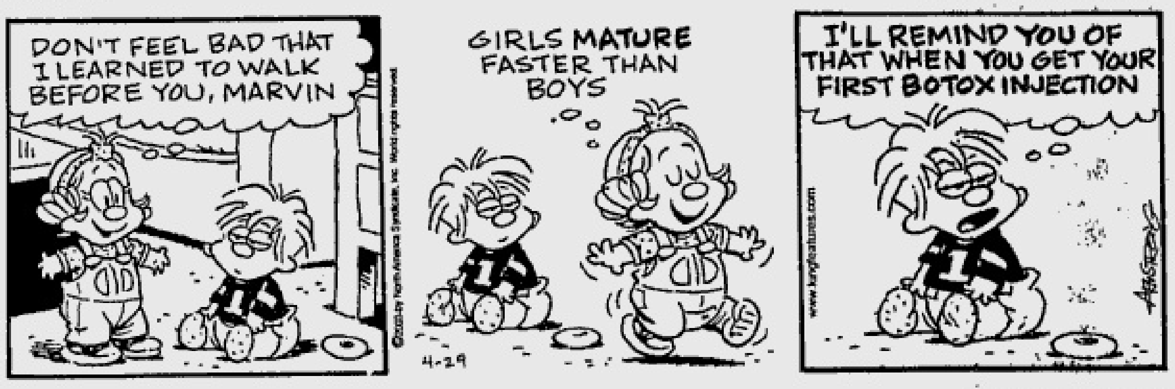
BY TOM ARMSTRONG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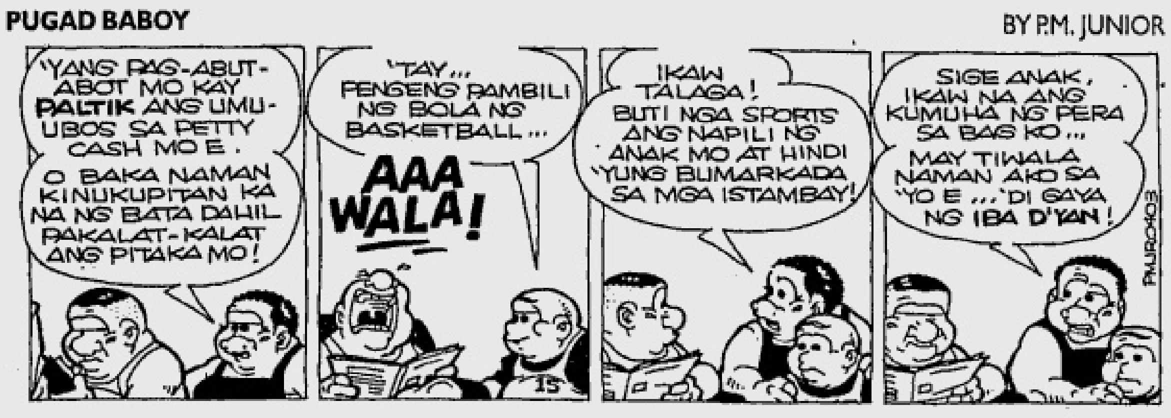
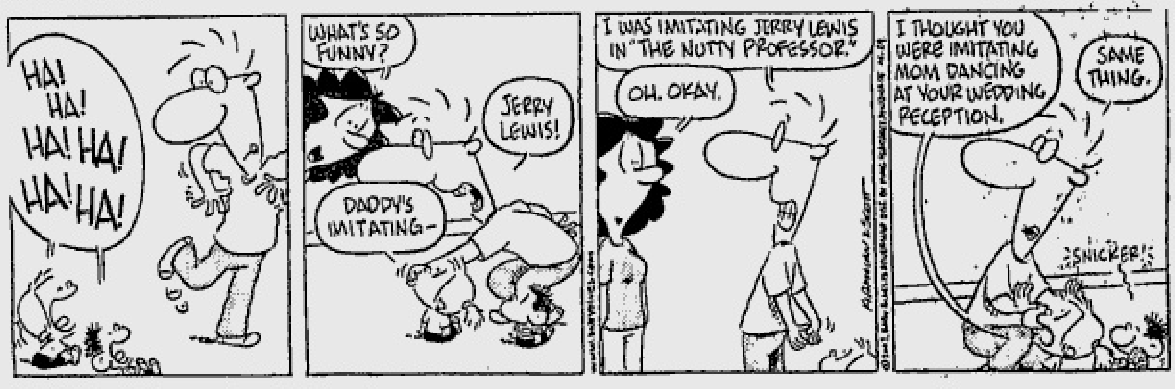
BY P.M. JUNIOR


'YANG PAG-ABUT-ABOT MO KAY PALTIK ANG UMU-UBOS SA PETTY CASH MO E.
O BAKA NAMAN KINUKUPITAN KA NA NG BATA DAHIL PAKALAT-KALAT ANG PITAKA MO!
'TAY... PENGENG PAMBILI NG BOLA NG BASKETBALL...
AAA WALA!
IKAW TALAGA! BUTI NGA SPORTS ANG NAPILI NG ANAK MO AT HINDI 'YUNG BUMARKADA SA MGA ISTAMBAY!
SIGE ANAK, IKAW NA ANG KUMUHA NG PERA SA BAG KO...
MAY TIWALA NAMAN AKO SA 'YO E... 'DI GAYA NG IBA D'YAN!
PMJR0403

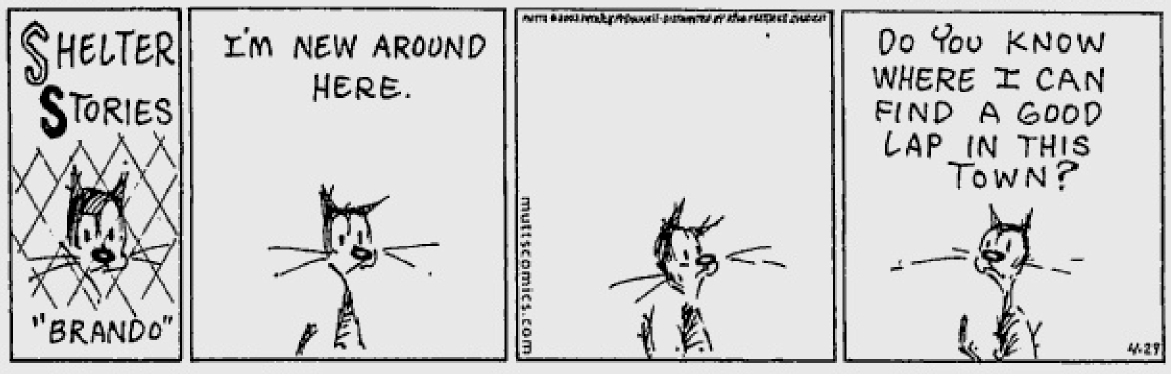
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
JERRY LEWIS!
DADDY'S IMITATING-
I WAS IMITATING JERRY LEWIS IN "THE NUTTY PROFESSOR."
OH, OKAY.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE IMITATING MOM DANCING AT YOUR WEDDING RECEPTION.
SAME THING.
SNICKER!

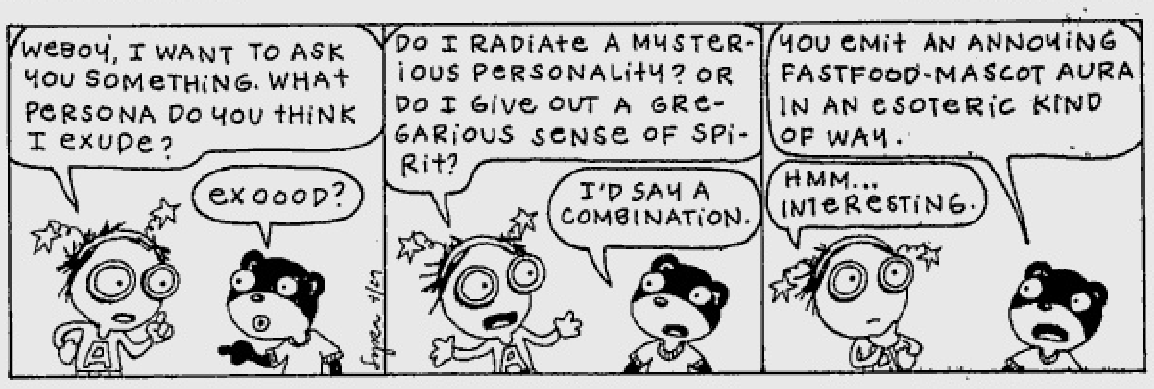
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHELTER STORIES
"BRANDO"
I'M NEW AROUND HERE.
muttscomics.com
DO YOU KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND A GOOD LAP IN THIS TOWN?
4-29

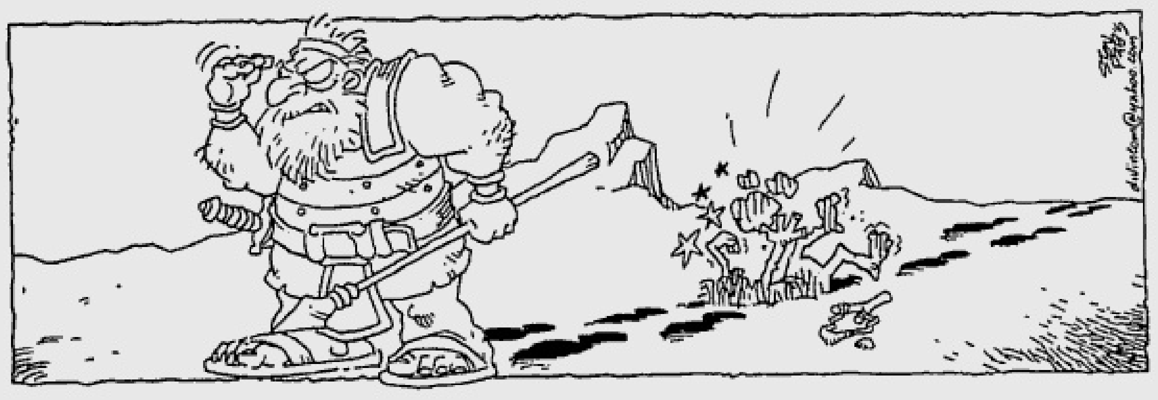
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WEBOY, I WANT TO ASK YOU SOMETHING. WHAT PERSONA DO YOU THINK I EXUDE?
EXOOOD?
DO I RADIATE A MYSTERIOUS PERSONALITY? OR DO I GIVE OUT A GREGARIOUS SENSE OF SPIRIT?
I'D SAY A COMBINATION.
YOU EMIT AN ANNOYING FASTFOOD-MASCOT AURA IN AN ESOTERIC KIND OF WAY.
HMM... INTERESTING.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are determined and persevering. You're also very nurturing and protective with your loved ones. When you can, you will enjoy retirement. (You do like your ease and comfort.) You value the love and respect of others. This year you will be presented with an important choice—choose wisely.
Birthdate of: Cloris Leachman, actress; Willie Nelson, singer/songwriter; Jill Clayburgh, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You're in the mood to shop. Buy something beautiful for yourself or a little gift for loved ones. It's just what you need to pick up your spirits.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today and tomorrow, the Moon is in your sign. It's your turn to expect the universe to owe you a favor. Ask for anything that you want a "yes" answer to.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You need to have some time to yourself today. Even a few brief moments of solitude will help you to restore your peace of mind and make you feel calmer.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Get out and socialize! Enjoy the company of friends, groups and clubs. Compare notes with others and make sure that you are up on the latest gossip.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Discussions with a parent or a person in authority are important today. It's easy to establish feelings of mutual respect. Others are willing to respect you, once you show respect for them.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your desire to escape from your daily routine is strong. Why not be a tourist in your own city? Do something different so that you see your familiar world with fresh eyes.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Clear up loose ends related to insurance matters, wills and inheritances, or debt and shared property. This is a good day to discuss these matters with others.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): With the Moon opposite your sign, you have to go more than halfway when dealing with others. Be friendly and patient; make sure you listen carefully to what others are saying.

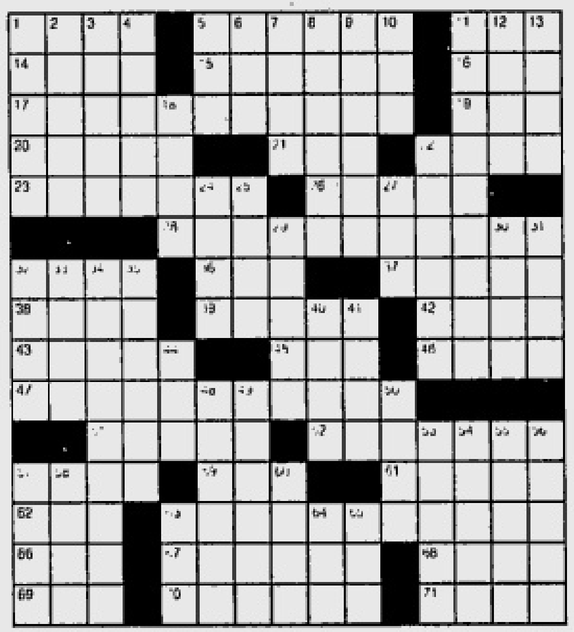
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Think about how you can improve your health today. Stop doing one thing that is excessive or harmful to your body. (Stopping something is easier than starting something.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Love, romance and flirtations fill the air! You feel saucy and playful. (Capricorns are old when they're young and young when they're old.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Get out and exercise today. After that, enjoy cozy times at home with family members. Invite somebody over to help you or give you practical assistance in some way.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You have a strong urge to tell somebody something today. By all means—do so! Discussions with siblings and relatives about past matters are way overdue.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
4/29/03

ACROSS
1 Slight advantage
5 Seasoned sausage
11 Nocturnal flyer
14 Dry
15 Catchphrase
16 Sound of distaste
17 1919 legislation
19 Billy __ Williams
20 Bedding down
21 Late starter?
22 Skewed
23 German POW camps
26 Struck powerfully
28 Result of 17A
32 Gilbert or Teasdale
36 Pub quaff
37 Strong, cotton thread
38 Bahrain leader
39 Right to claim
42 Conspiracy unit
43 TV host
45 Bauxite, e.g.
46 Asian sea
47 Result of 28A
51 Fowl choice
52 Swizzle stick
57 Aahs' partners
59 Letter additions: abbr.
61 Get going
62 Exist
63 Result of 28A
66 Holiday in Hanoi
67 "Brigadoon" lyricist
68 Say it __ so!
69 Mayday!
70 Daniel of Nicaragua
71 Fish catchers

DOWN
1 Gutters' location
2 __ du seigneur
3 Hayworth movie
4 Ford lemon
5 112.5 degrees from W
6 __ mode
7 City near Sacramento
8 Career grand slam tennis champion
9 City near Peoria
10 Bank payt.
11 Beer brand
12 Maturing agent
13 "...see how __ run"
18 Snare
22 New York prison
24 Metric unit
25 One-and-only
27 Texas tea
29 Long-necked wader
30 __ podrida
31 Foster film
32 Appear to be
33 Arsenal cache
34 Rebounds
35 Sports venues
40 Writer Murdoch
41 Temporary shelter
44 Paranormal insight
48 Hedda of gossip
49 Set among
50 Colorado tributary
53 Spruce juice
54 Bring up
55 Occurrence
56 Takes a break
57 Feedbag grain
58 Dunkable treat
60 Of sound mind
63 __-mo
64 Quantity of beer
65 Period of note

Monday's Puzzle Solved

B	I	D	S	■	S	L	A	B	■	C	U	R	L	S
A	S	E	A	■	C	O	L	A	■	A	G	A	I	N
A	L	L	S	■	A	R	A	B	■	C	H	I	N	O
L	E	I	S	U	R	E	S	U	I	T	■	N	E	W
■	■	■	■	L	E	N	■	S	N	I	T	■	■	■
A	G	E	N	T	S	■	J	H	S	■	E	W	A	N
R	U	M	O	R	■	B	A	K	E	■	T	A	R	O
C	A	B	B	A	G	E	P	A	T	C	H	K	I	D
E	V	E	L	■	U	T	E	S	■	R	E	E	S	E
D	A	R	E	■	L	O	S	■	C	U	R	S	E	S
■	■	■	S	O	C	K	■	B	A	R	■	■	■	■
D	A	M	■	T	H	E	M	A	C	A	R	E	N	A
U	R	I	A	H	■	N	O	S	H	■	E	D	E	N
A	I	S	L	E	■	E	R	I	E	■	E	D	I	T
L	A	S	E	R	■	D	E	N	T	■	L	Y	L	E

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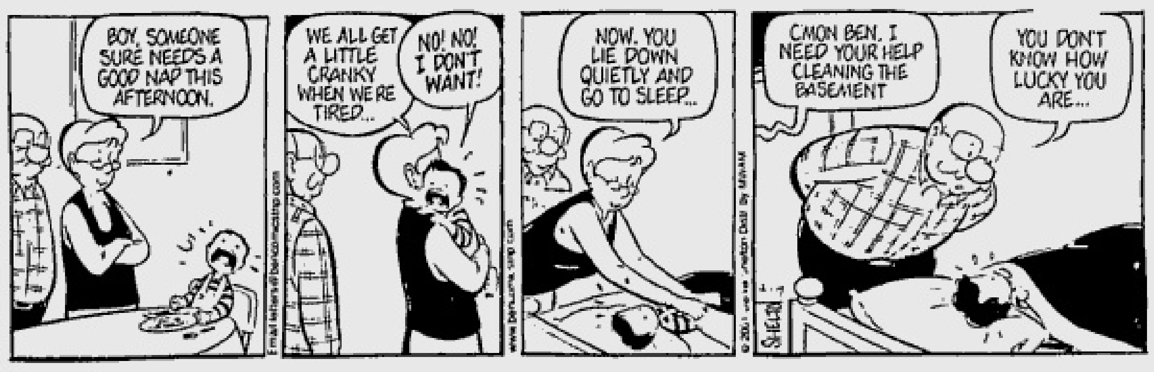
4/29/03

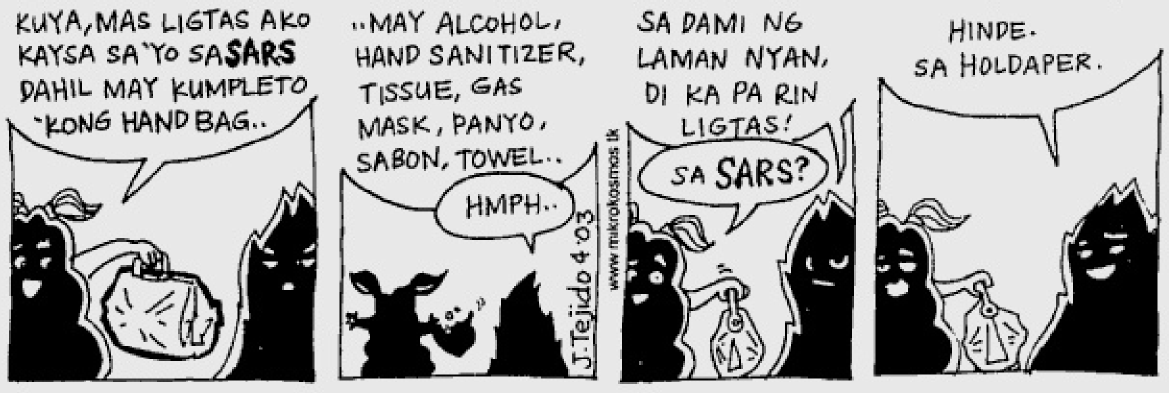
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BOY, SOMEONE SURE NEEDS A GOOD NAP THIS AFTERNOON.
WE ALL GET A LITTLE CRANKY WHEN WE'RE TIRED...
NO! NO! I DON'T WANT!
NOW, YOU LIE DOWN QUIETLY AND GO TO SLEEP...
C'MON BEN, I NEED YOUR HELP CLEANING THE BASEMENT
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE...
www.bencomicstrip.com

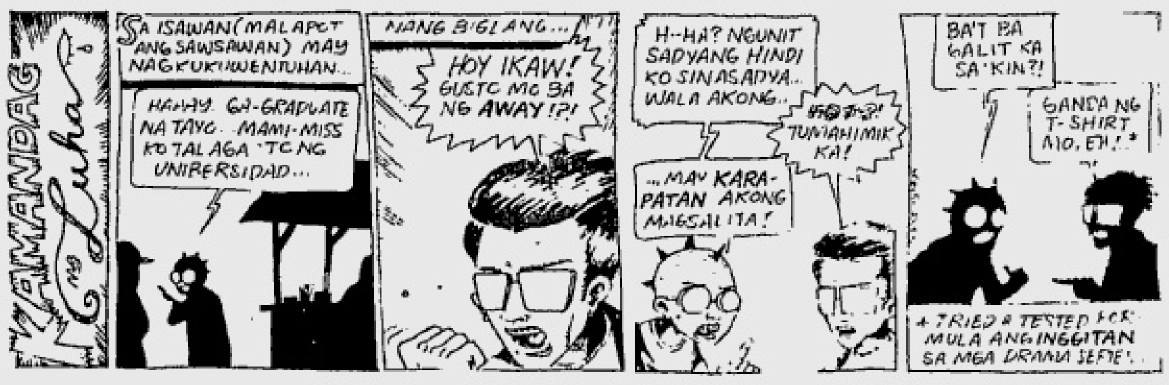
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KUYA, MAS LIGTAS AKO KAYSA SA 'YO SA SARS DAHIL MAY KUMPLETO 'KONG HAND BAG..
..MAY ALCOHOL, HAND SANITIZER, TISSUE, GAS MASK, PANYO, SABON, TOWEL..
HMPH..
J.Tejido 4.03
www.mikrokosmos.tk
SA DAMI NG LAMAN NYAN, DI KA PA RIN LIGTAS!
SA SARS?
HINDE. SA HOLDAPER.

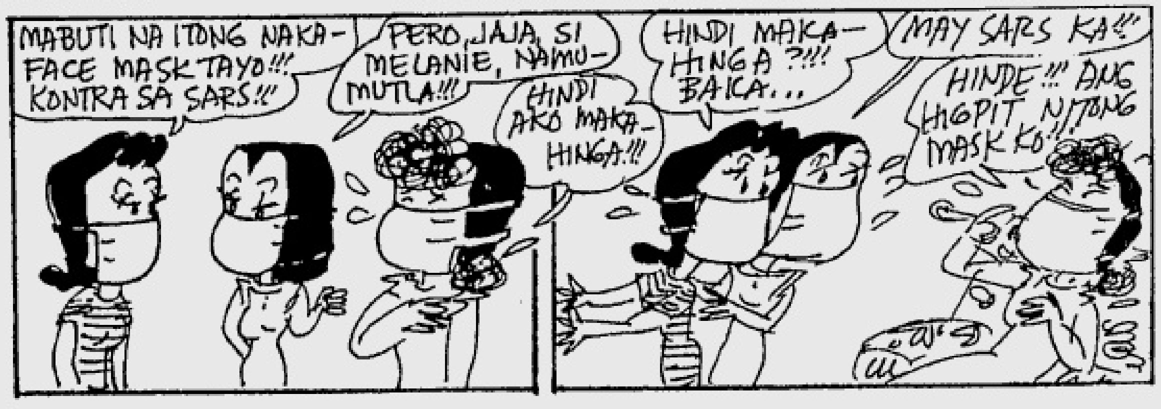
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


KAMANDAG ng Luha
SA ISAWAN (MALAPOT ANG SAWSAWAN) MAY NAGKUKUWENTUHAN...
HAAAY. GA-GRADUATE NA TAYO.. MAMI-MISS KO TALAGA 'TONG UNIBERSIDAD...
NANG BIGLANG...
HOY IKAW! GUSTO MO BA NG AWAY!?!
H--HA? NGUNIT SADYANG HINDI KO SINASADYA.. WALA AKONG..
TUMAHIMIK KA!
...MAY KARAPATAN AKONG MAGSALITA!
BA'T BA GALIT KA SA 'KIN?!
GANDA NG T-SHIRT MO, EH!
TRIED & TESTED FOR MULA ANG INGGITAN SA MGA DRAMA SERYE.

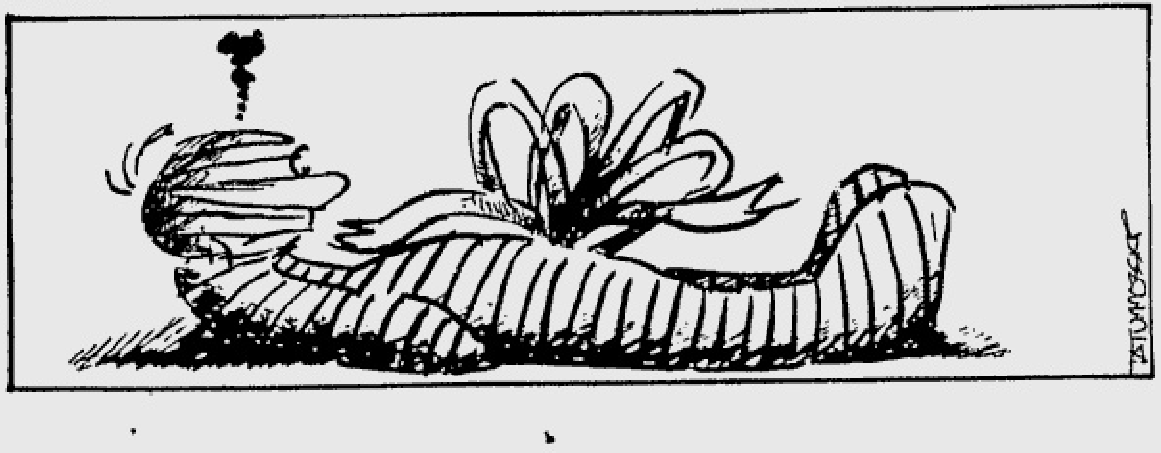
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MABUTI NA ITONG NAKA-FACE MASK TAYO!!! KONTRA SA SARS!!!
PERO, JAJA, SI MELANIE, NAMU-MUTLA!!!
HINDI AKO MAKA-HINGA!!!
HINDI MAKA-HINGA ?!!! BAKA...
MAY SARS KA!!!
HINDE!!! ANG HIGPIT NITONG MASK KO!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



Are claims of sex with spirits hallucinations?

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

MY two columns of March 18 and 25 about incubi and succubi (i.e. spirits who have sexual intercourse with humans) elicited a number of questions from readers who were intrigued by these stories.

One of them asked if it's possible that these women who claimed to have had sexual relations with male spirits were only hallucinating because of some repressed desires and not because the events really took place.

Of course this is possible. But such incidents have also been reported by perfectly healthy individuals with sound minds and emotions and who have normal sexual relations with living humans while awake.

The incidents do not happen only to sexually starved or deprived men and women. Many of those who experienced them were married with normal sex lives.

Another reader said, "I thought when a person died, he or she no longer had carnal desires?"

That is not necessarily true. The fact is, when a person dies, he remains to be the same character as when he was alive, at least immediately after death. The only difference is that, after death, he no longer has a physical body nor physical perceptions. But he may, for a certain period, continue to desire or crave physical and sensual pleasures.

The main reason for the confusion and misunderstanding about the nature of the afterlife is that popular religious doctrines have conditioned people's minds to think in a particular way and to accept only a certain type of thinking.

No monopoly on truth

Given the amount of information available to those sincerely seeking logical answers to their deepest questions, this is no longer possible. More people are now awakening to the fact that no single religion has a monopoly on truth.

Carnal desires may continue after death, so sexual activity does not necessarily cease after death. It may even be more openly experienced after death than when a person was still alive.

Sex after death is discussed in "By Lust Possessed," a book edited by Eric Lombard, with introduction by well-known psychic writer and researcher Martin Ebon. In a chapter contributed by R. De Witt Miller, the answer is a resounding, "Yes, sex does not disappear after we discard our physical bodies."

What were the author's basis for the conclusion?

- "The testimony of those who have gone out of their bodies through astral projection. All testimonies said their astral bodies have the same sex in the after-life as in their physical bodies. They also testify they still possess sex organs."
- "The pattern of the astral body follows the pattern of the physical body."
- "There's no ghost that appeared to humans who has a different sex when still alive."
- "There is no record of any dead person declaring in a reliable spirit communication through any type of mediumship that death changed his or her sex."

De Witt further argued that if the dead person did not lose his or her sense of sight and hearing, why should he or she lose the sense of smell, touch and taste?

"How can you justify the continuance of two of the physical senses and not the other three?" asked De Witt. "If the basic sensory mechanism is in the second (or astral) body, then all of the senses must be beyond the reach of physical death. If the sensory mechanism is in the physical body, then why should the visual and auditory nerve patterns survive and not the tactile or the olfactory? No matter how you slice it, it still comes out nonsense."

Well, the answer may lie somewhere else. I've left my physical body many times. The first time happened in 1975. I realized that out there in the astral or spirit world there was only pure consciousness or awareness. One does not hear with the ears or see with the eyes as in the physical world. There's only "knowingness."

Sensations from consciousness

We are aware of all sensations but they are not coming from the physical body, because we are separated from it, but from a certain consciousness or awareness. We could see, hear, feel the people around us all at once. We could even become acutely aware of their thoughts.

During one astral projection, I had astral sex with a living woman who was also out of her body. Although there was no physical or sexual contact between us, the sensation was a lot more intense and total compared to mere physical sex. It was truly a union of two souls rather than just physical bodies.

Perhaps this is what happens in the afterlife. One can relate to the spirit of the opposite sex, unite with him or her soul to soul. Then only will we truly know another human being—literally united with him or her spiritually. With total soul union, there can be no secrets from either party, nor from anyone in the same spiritual state.

As the spirit, Julia, communicated through British journalist, W.T. Stead on Oct. 11, 1908:

"There is no restriction on the liberty of love. If anyone arriving here is incapable of vibrating in sympathy with anyone but the spouse of earth life, they can remain as monogamous here as on earth. But we do not regard that selfishness of two as the highest stage. Yes, the sexes continue, but sex is deeper than the organs in which it finds its temporary expression on earth."

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati City. Call 810-7245 or 892-6806 or e-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://j.licauco.tripod.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

Sex with spirits do not happen only to sexually starved or deprived people

Weight-loss product halts type 2 diabetes

RESULTS from the largest study of its kind reveal that Roche's anti-obesity agent, Xenical (Orlistat), significantly delays or prevents the onset of type 2 diabetes in obese patients at risk of developing the disease. In conjunction with lifestyle intervention, the product was also associated with significant and sustained weight loss compared with lifestyle intervention alone with no safety concerns.

The Xenical in the prevention of diabetes in obese subjects (Xendos) trial is hailed as a landmark trial in the area of weight management and obesity. It is also the first study to investigate the safety and efficacy of a weight-loss product for as long as four years.

The data were presented by Prof. Lars Sjorstrom of the Sahlgrenska University Hospital of Sweden. "While diet and exercise to reduce weight are frontline therapies for reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, weight-loss agents in combination with lifestyle intervention can help further reduce the risk. The aim of Xendos was to see if Orlistat could reduce both weight and the risk of diabetes more than the already impressive reductions seen in lifestyle intervention studies," Sjorstrom said.

Discount to help clean-air effort

PETRON Philippines and SeaOil are giving a 20-percent discount on labor for engine tune-up to clients of selected Petron and SeaOil stations in Metro Manila until April 30.

The offer is in support of efforts to help clean the air as part of the global observance of Earth Day 2003 spearheaded by the Environment Management Bureau (EMB)-National Capital Region (NCR) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Promo slogan is "Let's Tune-Up to Clean Up the Air."

Petron and SeaOil also vowed to provide clean fuel in compliance with standards set by the Clean Air Act.

Studies reveal that about 80 percent of the country's total air pollution come from motor vehicles, especially old, worn-out machines.

The World Bank's Philippine Environment Monitor 2002 on Air Quality found that air pollution was causing serious health problems and lower productivity among Metro Manilans.

This summer, enjoy the coolest treat in town.

Get Rewards for FEWER points and LESS cash thru Super Offer only with the world's local bank.

*Redeem your Rewards on **May 10-11 & May 17-18, 2003.***

All over the world, HSBC gives an exclusive treat to its credit cardholders - an easier way to get their rewards. In the Philippines, we do the same with Super Offer.

Now, get the choicest Rewards for FEWER points and LESS cash! From flat TV's to DVD players, airconditioners, portable washing machines and more!

Keep using your credit card from HSBC to pile up your points. Then use those points to redeem your Rewards on the following **Super Offer weekends: May 10 - 11 & May 17 - 18, 2003.** For more details, get your Super Offer Rewards catalog at any HSBC or HSBC Savings branch or call 878-7878. You can also log-on at www.hsbc.com.ph.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0465. Series of 2003.

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EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Right angle pose

THIS yoga-inspired exercise strengthens the thighs and buttocks, as well as stretches the inner thighs.

Equipment:
None

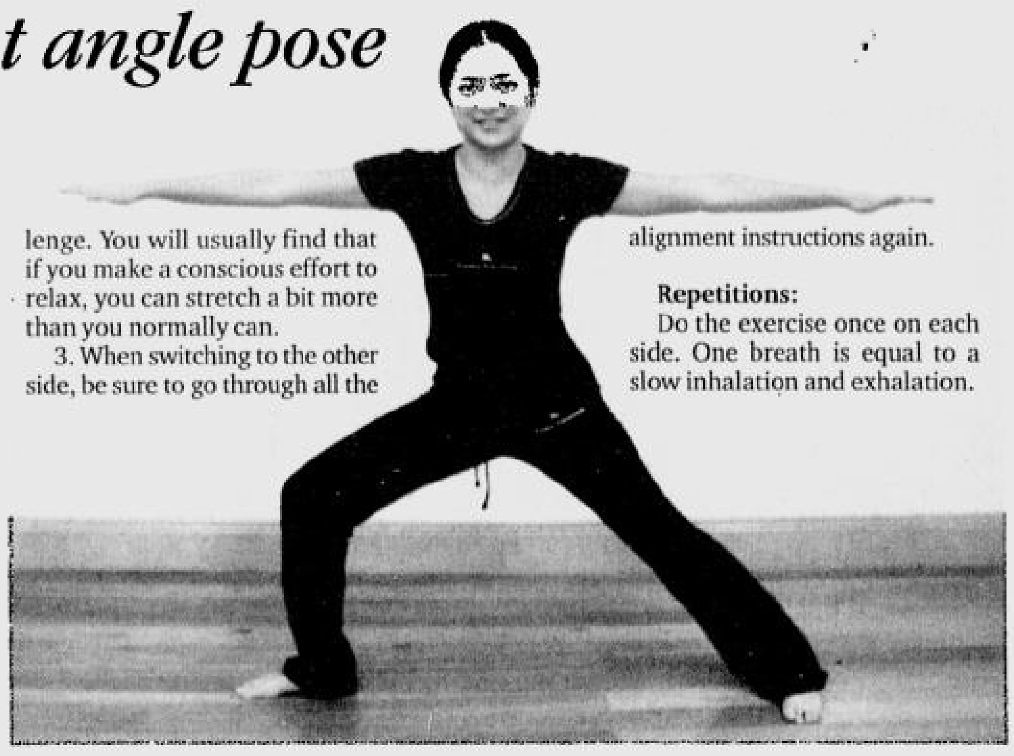
Exercise technique:

1. Stand with your legs as wide as you can. Look down and check if the toes of one foot are in line with the other.
2. Turn your left leg towards the side of the room. Look down and check that the heel of your left foot is in line with the arch of your right foot.
3. Lift your right heel and turn your right foot in slightly.
4. Bend your left leg. Make sure that your knee is right over your ankle and does not go past your toes.
5. Pull yourself up tall and bring your arms to shoulder level. Make sure to keep your shoulders relaxed and pressed down.
6. Hold the pose for five breaths.
7. Slowly return to starting position and repeat on the other side.

Performance tips:

1. Consciously focus on your breathing and relaxing during the exercise.
2. Halfway through the exercise, try to move your legs a little wider for more of a challenge. You will usually find that if you make a conscious effort to relax, you can stretch a bit more than you normally can.
3. When switching to the other side, be sure to go through all the alignment instructions again.

Repetitions:
Do the exercise once on each side. One breath is equal to a slow inhalation and exhalation.



Surgeons slated to meet in early May

DR. Fernando L. Lopez, president of the Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS), in a recent meeting with the Board of Regents, has announced that the traditional midyear convention of 2003 will be held in San Fernando, La Union, on May 9-10.

Dr. Lopez immediately communicated with the Northern Luzon chapter through its president, Dr. Maximo M. Callangan Jr., and began making preparations for the event and establishing contact with the other chapters in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

**PCS president
Dr. Fernando Lopez**

The midyear convention will be the PCS' 29th, the first having been celebrated in 1974.

The PCS has envisioned a continuing surgical education for busy fellows in the provinces, which facility is brought closer to them. Topics of applicability especially in areas where tertiary hospital and services are not readily accessible, will be given special regard.

Senior fellows will be invited as speakers, panelists or rectors, so that the most contemporary thoughts about surgical problems will be discussed in an insular setting, with societal and economic conditions in the provinces given more appropriate focus and consideration.

Dr. Edgardo R. Cortez, overall chair of the committee on convention, and Dr. Harry P. Supan, chair of the sub-committee on midyear convention, are planning to feature informal Kapihan and Tanghalian talks to encourage the surgeons to participate in relaxed scientific intercourses which have likewise been popularized by the PCS with its foreign guests.

Dr. Lopez has supported the Kapihan and Tanghalian sessions and indicated that they should be continued henceforth as a standard component in the training program activities of the younger fellows of the PCS. He further reflected that the Filipino patient is going to be the ultimate recipient of the initiative of the PCS to keep its fellows correctly updated with surgical information.

10 rules to observe for water safety

1. LEARN how to swim.
2. Never swim alone. Choose a "Water Buddy" before swimming in the pool or beach.
3. Always have a responsible adult "water watcher" who knows how to get emergency help and is trained in CPR.
4. Don't dive into shallow water or when unsupervised by an adult.
5. No glass containers around the pool or the beach.
6. Swim only in clear weather and head for cover when a storm threatens.
7. No running or roughplay near the pool area.
8. Keep all electrical appliances away from the pool.
9. Don't jump into the water to save someone; throw a life ring or float to them and call for help.
10. Learn your local emergency number (1-1-7) and keep a working phone by the pool.

The tips above are from the Bert Lozada Swim School (BLSS) "Safe Swimmer, Happy Summer" water-safety awareness campaign. Call 563-5532 or 803-5998 or e-mail BLSS@email.com.

Asian healing arts summer fest at Chacra

THE CENTER for Health and Creative Arts (Chacra) offers a full range of workshops on Asian bodymind healing arts this summer: Basic Holistic Yoga—May 8, 15, 22 and 29 evenings; Shibashi (Taiji-Qi-gong) and Sitting Healing Qigong Part II—May 10, 17, 24 and 31 mornings, and Path of the Bagani, Arnis, kuntao and other traditional Filipino martial arts for children and adults—May 10, 17, 24 and 31 afternoons.

Participants will learn the basic movements, breathing techniques, and mental quieting, as well as the theory and philosophy behind the healing arts, for practical application in stress management, physical fitness and holistic health maintenance. Asian healing arts are also recognized for promoting concentration, clear thinking and inner peace.

Chacra is located at 59 C. Salvador St., Loyola Heights, QC. Call 434-5381.

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sa Grand Raffle ng Touch Mobile Celle-babad Raffle Promo
Sa bawat 1 minute na tawag, Voice Message, Voice Info o Karaoke = 1 electronic raffle entry

Ang daling manalo:

1. Importanteng mag-register para makasali. Register once by texting: "reg_<your name>_ <your address>" to 2292.
hal. "reg Johnny Reyes 1902 New York St., Cubao" at i-text sa 2292.
2. Mag-Celle-babad. Tumawag (₱6.50 /min. cell to cell and cell to local landline, ₱9.50 /min. NDD, $0.40 /min. IDD), Mag-Voice Message (₱3.00 /min.), Voice Info (₱3.00 /min.) at Karaoke (₱2.50 /min.). Every 1 minute on your TouchMobile is equivalent to 1 electronic raffle entry.
Kaya: 2 min. calls = 2 electronic raffle entries; 3 min. calls = 3 electronic raffle entries.
3. Touch Mobile Celle-babad Raffle Promo is from April 21 to June 15, 2003

The more you Celle-babad on your Touch Mobile, baka ang dream house mo, mapasa-iyo!

See flyers for more details.

*Only charged voice calls will be valid for this promo. All calls to 801, 802, 808 and other toll free numbers are not qualified as entries.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0873. Series of 2003.

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